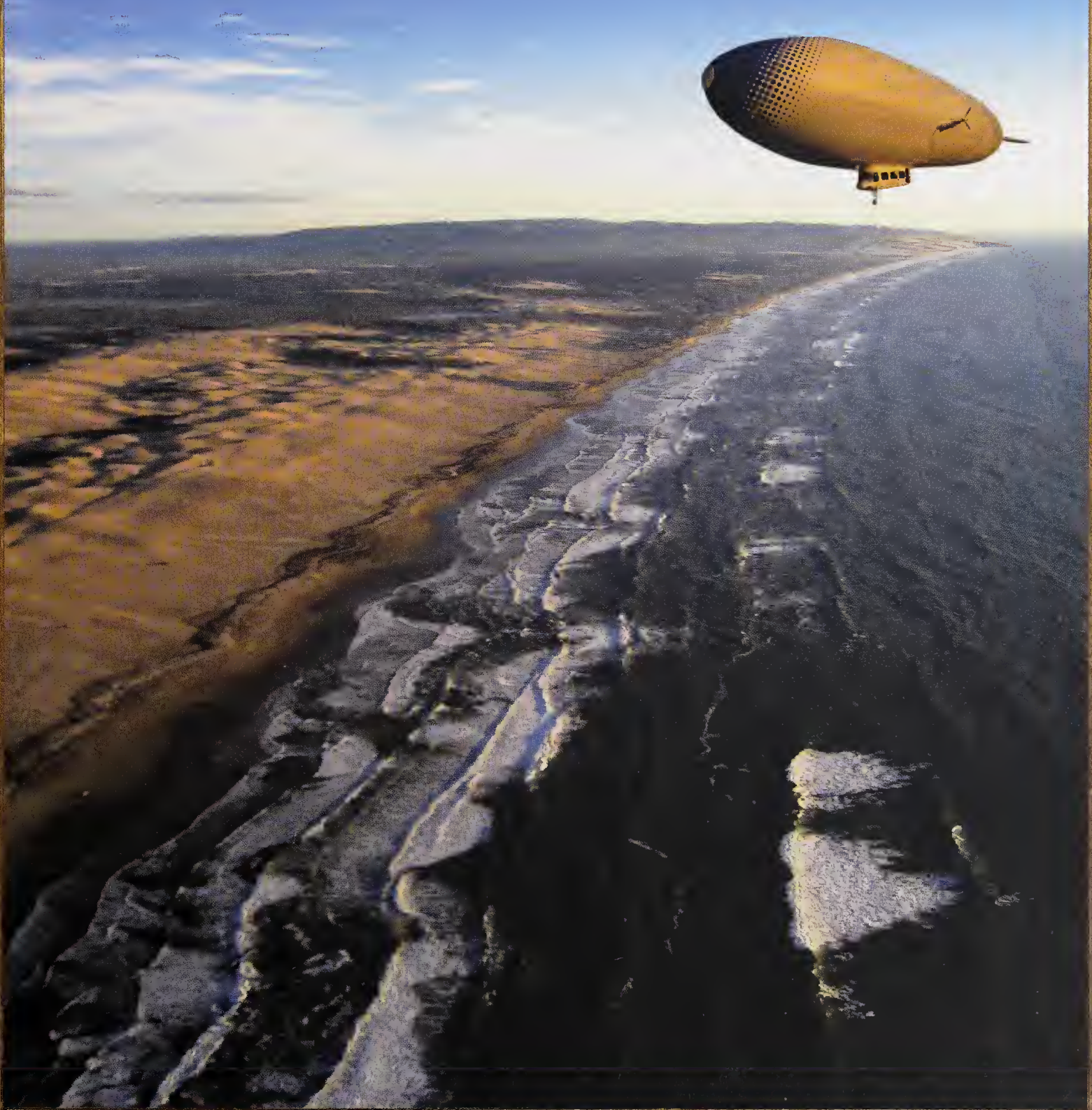
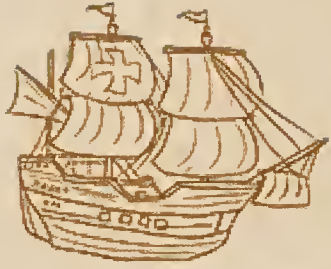


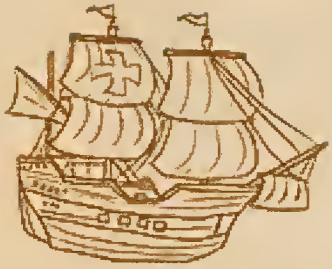
CALIFORNIA FROM 500 FEET

A STORY OF THE COASTLINE

By Jamis H. MacNiven









In 1538 Mercator showed that California was clearly a peninsula.



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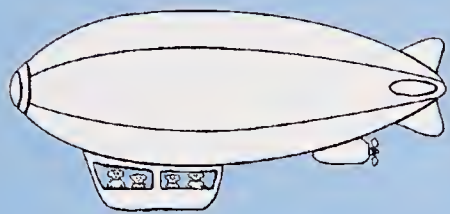
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By 1610 it had become an island.



And it began to grow bigger and bigger.



It's been getting bigger ever since.

CALIFORNIA FROM 500 FEET

A S T O R Y O F T H E C O A S T L I N E

By Jamis H. MacNiven

Published by
Liverwurst Press



LIVERWURST PRESS

"The Wurst books in print"

California From 500 Feet
A Story of the Coastline

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“The *Wurst* books in print.”

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2015
No rights reserved. Go ahead and steal it.
I’d be flattered.

Any resemblance to people living or dead is entirely on
purpose because it’s a history book.

A note: This book was layed by in its surcease due to a freshet from
Moby-Dick—that blew into a gale—resulting in the relentless ontogenical
wordmongering that has inexorably repercussed. If you haven’t read
Melville’s unparagoned classic, stop reading this waste of paper and read
Moby-Dick—instanta!

I was ably assisted by Steve Beck of Graphics Handyman

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For Margaret

Passenger, "Hey, the people down there look like ants!"
Flight attendant, "They are ants. We haven't left yet."
-old joke-



Preamble

One day I was walking with my dog Emma along a lane in the woods when she stopped suddenly and barked at an apparition that hove into view through the canopy of trees. It was the airship Eureka, a dirigible of incomparable size and beauty. I stared in wonder and said to the dog, “I’m looking at my new best friend—except you of course.”

When cruising along in a sky yacht at 500 feet you can spot surfers on the swell laying for the perfect wave. You hear the roped dog’s bark and the Harley chopping up a grade. The freeways beneath surge with yellow taxis, red convertibles, silvery semis, black limousines—moving as a clockwork painting below—ever streaming, each one a story. Countless stories really.

Flying over the countryside one sees canals flowing into irrigation ditches, fanning out into row upon row of sweet fruit trees, toothy artichokes, precise tomatoes, and potent marijuana...oh yes, lots of marijuana.

Mountains crumple into foothills and dunes invade the land, the fragile shore relentlessly surrendering to sea and tide.

From the air we bare witness to man grappling with nature—each vying for supremacy. Man wants things straight, waterproof and on time. Nature prefers the blurry fractal, the gentle curve and the soft flexibility of seasons.

I was witness to this epic contest along one piece of geography known as the California coastline.

This is that story.



Amble

The earliest verified date for humans on the California coast is around the time of the last Ice Age. They call this little pile of bones Arlington Springs Man. Later it was determined that they were the bones of a woman so they changed the name to Arlington Springs Woman. Now it has been determined once again that they really are the bones of a man, if one much diminished by all this toing and froing. What difference does it make? Not much. Sort of funny though, that the earliest bits of humanity we have from California involve gender confusion.



Man Woman-Man Boy Goat? grrrr!

10,000 years later Jake Cox dressed as a chicken, jumped out of an airplane and ignited his kerosene soaked costume as he fell in a glorious fireball into the ocean to the enchantment of the tens of thousands of people below at the Venice Pier in 1915. The crowd simply loved him and so do I. I'm just crazy for all the interesting characters that have had a hand in creating this kale flavored jelly donut we call—California.

My state is sometimes dismissively referred to as the 'left coast' or 'the land of fruits and nuts' by people who are not from around here. Me, I like the nickname 'the gold coast' best. The state's mineral is gold of course and for good reason. From the time of a casual discovery in 1848 of a nugget in the stream, the state has shone with a glint both real and metaphoric. Our flower is the Golden Poppy, our fields wave with Golden Wheat. Our freshwater fish is the Golden Trout and our marine fish is the bright orange Garibaldi. The list is long but it seems to me that our gold streak ended with our official insect: the Dogfaced Butterfly—until I discovered that, you guessed it—it's brilliant gold. There is so much that is superlative about the state that our official state punctuation mark is the exclamation point ! Our state motto is Eureka! which is Greek for, 'I have found it!' and the 'it' referred to is gold.

And what about The Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco? Funny thing is that the one gold reference that started it all had nothing really to do with California's gold. Colonel John C. Fremont in an 1842 dispatch referred to the entrance of San Francisco Bay as the Golden Gate because it reminded him of the isthmus named The Golden Horn in the city of Constantinople the capital of ancient Byzantium. He never actually visited the place but it felt right to him. The term Golden Gate was rarely used until it came to fit so perfectly in 1849.



How apt therefore that our journey along the coast of California should be in the great Zep-
 pelin, Eureka, the largest airship in the world. This magnificent aircraft allowed me to do things
 that I couldn't do in more conventional aircraft like yelling to people on the ground and landing
 by balancing a single small tire with the 246'-3/4" ship suspended above. What great fun it was
 to astonish the tourists, like an unscheduled eclipse, when our huge shadow swept over them at
 Hearst Castle. That's just a neat trick. But hovering silently over the redwood forest primeval or
 following a pod of blue whales is the stuff of dreams.

Looking at the waves crashing along the shore and seeing back in time I recalled the solitary
 woman who spent 19 years by herself in the early 1800s on an island off today's Los Angeles.
 And I marvel at Larry Winters' flight one morning in his weather balloon-powered lawn chair to
 19,000 feet over Long Beach. And how is it that so few have heard of the fact that a pirate cap-
 tured Monterey, California's Spanish capital, and claimed California for Argentina?

I will tell you a tale of lost children, found legs and discuss the 65 costumes in the 1963
 movie *Cleopatra* that Elizabeth Taylor kept falling out of.

I get just a little serious when I bring you the amazing tale of the Mexican American War and
 how the U.S. seized all of Mexico and seriously considered keeping the entire country (we kept
 half). I will fill you in on how we could have ended up being Russian, British, French or New
 Helvetian. I'll tell you about my Palos Verdes High School classmate who has spent the last half
 century in prison for espionage and Barbra Streisand who is imprisoned (according to her) by
 tourists (oops, guilty) hovering over her house in Malibu.

Cruising along the coast we will pass through more than just space and time as together we
 discover how folks dreamed California up. As we cut our engines and stick our heads out the
 windows of our ship we can listen to the sky and maybe just barely hear their stories before their
 voices fade away forever.

So come with me as we cast off and begin our journey at the water's edge from The Fence
 with Mexico in the south, fierce and sad, to the Smith River 840 miles north where the Cascadi-
 an's shake their tiny fists skyward at us declaring that they are not part of California.

And hey, try not to fall out of the gondola.



Rowan, Jamis, Tyler and Dylan MacNiven

The Fence

On a bright spring morning we lifted off from the airport in San Diego aboard the Eureka and sailed south the 20 or so miles to—The Fence. This bleak line in the sand is a stark reminder that politics matter. Animosities between Mexico and the United States date back nearly two centuries and our relationship continues to be dyspeptical. Our two countries are locked in a tarantella of estrangement and affection, leavened with distrust, pity, envy, trade (legal and ill) and racism. It's complicated.

Visualize if you will the fence on the beach between Tijuana with its 1.4 million people and the town of Chula Vista. You will no doubt conjure up concrete guard towers and a fierce barrier

festooned with razor wire extending far into the ocean. Perhaps you imagine the beach ablaze with searchlights at night—half-tracks plying the sand bristling with 50 caliber machine guns swiveling back and forth menacingly to intimidate anyone foolish enough to make a break for it. This is what most folks expect in this time when the drug wars share headlines with the simple workers trying to negotiate the border.

The DMZ aspect of this piece of coast is certainly what I expected but the reality was very different. The imagined fence does indeed look like what I've described for much of its length but when I was there the fence at the beach was a triviality of iron bars haphazardly jammed in the sand. It could be walked through, walked around at low tide and even played volleyball over between teams in two countries. Vendors sold Cokes from Mexico though the gaps to American beach goers and Mexican kids tried their English on the California surfers through the gaps. There is even an international yoga class on the sand. The America Border Patrol is watching and there are jeeps on the beach but the atmosphere is, well, like a day at the beach. (Note: the fence has recently been beefed up quite a bit but the waves are dismantling it once again.)





The border is a depressing accumulation of random circumstances unworthy of modern countries. From the sky you can see the lush green fields on the U.S. side and then suddenly there is a sharp cut, as if cleaved by a heavenly machete, demarcating the dusty squalor on the Mexican side. Tijuana is a relatively prosperous city but by California standards it looks like a bomb went off in a junkyard. The corpses of cars share dessicated moonscape yards with bewildered chickens and half finished buildings,

their skeletal rebar stabbing from the rooftops, gives the place an atmosphere of despair. With the interminable crossing delays to return to the U.S. and the tens of thousands of drug murders, tourism has withered and the many beachfront developments south of Tijuana (which looked like vertical trailer parks on their best day) now lie unfinished and abandoned. Dehydrated dogs patrol the streets dodging tumbleweeds and palm fronds which bound along in the wind.

We should have kept the whole place. We all would have been better off.

Our Ship



lightest element it's great for lifting airships but it does have the reputation of exploding in attention-getting fireballs whereas helium does not. In fact helium is the most stable of all the elements. So helium it is, but there's a catch. Helium might make up 24 percent of all matter in the universe but it is in short supply on earth and it's expensive. And the helium molecule is so small that it is problematical to contain and it percolates through the envelopes built to hold it so it likes to seep into outer space. Modern materials science has reduced but not eliminated this

Airships are filled with helium until the heavier air (air is about 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen, just under 1% argon and a smidge of other gases, [CO₂ is 1/300th of a single percent]) is displaced by the lighter helium.

Hydrogen used to be employed and because it is the



Tyler appreciating the ship

so ships can't be too far from their helium trucks which follow along below.

Any steerable 'lighter-than-air' airship is a dirigible but our skyship has a skeleton. Blimps have no skeleton. The dirigibles of a hundred years ago had fully rigid airframes but the Eureka needs the helium pressure to stay inflated and has a skeleton so it's hybrid or a semi-rigid.

The 12 passenger (with two crew) Eureka was built by the



The Hindenburg an hour prior to exploding

Zeppelin Company so it is also called a Zeppelin. I know what you're thinking—the exploding Hindenburg, everybody does. The Hindenburg was filled with highly excitable hydrogen and also had a flammable covering. What's generally forgotten about the Hindenburg is that as aircraft disasters go it was not as bad as typical airplane crashes because most of the passengers and crew survived.

The modern development and construction of the Eureka was financed by an endowment from Zeppelin established so long ago that it



The Hindenburg dining salon

was essentially lost in the books. A stipulation of the fund limited use of the money exclusively to airships. The money was discovered in the 1980s and by the 90s the endowment had grown to an amount deemed sufficient for the development and construction of a new dirigible. Thus was born the Zeppelin NT (New Technology).

With a maximum payload, the lifting capacity of the Eureka doesn't create quite enough oomph to make the whole ship lighter-than-air until some of the fuel is burned. The negative buoyancy is overcome using the engines which swivel to draw the ship into the sky. More on the ship later but now I see San Diego coming into view below us.



Easy to park

SAN DIEGO

Long before airships the explorers came in sailing ships. In 1542 Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo was the first European to show up in what is now San Diego. He arrived with two caravels; small ships of about 90 feet with two masts and a third smaller vessel for working closer to shore.



Cabrillo was an important character deserving more than a community college be named after him. It was he who conjured up the Manila Galleon trade route. He determined that if the Spanish built galleons on the west coast of Mexico they could sail with the trade winds to China and the Philippines and then coasting up as far as Japan they would ride the westerlies (winds,

If I owned a galleon I would so cover it with gold statues of naked women

which blew back toward the New World) all the way across the Pacific. This would put the ship in the Pacific Northwest and then they might be able to coast down to present day Acapulco. The goods would then be shipped 300 miles overland in crude carts with solid wooden wheels pulled by teams of oxen. The silks, crockery (eventually called 'china' due to its origin), spices and other valuables were loaded on ships for delivery to Spain. One or sometimes two Manila Galleons each year were dispatched across the Pacific for the 12 month voyage. Most of another year was needed for the second leg. The galleons in the Pacific made a single trip and were then so shot full of tornado worms they were beached and burned for their nails.

It was a prodigious effort to obtain luxury goods but it paid extremely well. These trappings had been coming along the arduous Silk Road from Asia at far greater expense for at least 1,500 years before they came by sea and the sea route was a major improvement. How is it possible that this was economically feasible? Was the dinnerware in Europe so crummy that it paid to ship porcelain from the opposite side of the earth?

I remember being taught in school that spices were useful in preserving food or concealing tainted meat smells. But the wealthy didn't eat preserved or tainted food. Spices, silks, jewels and the rest were a demonstration of status. It seems that there has always been an upper class with money but there was not a heck of lot to buy back then so exotic goods were highly sought after.

I wish I had more affection for San Diego but it's not easy because even though it is a real city with good weather and easy living the only exciting thing going on there is the regular incarceration of the mayor and city council. Not long ago some of them spent a few months at the Graybar Hotel for bribery involving hookers, strip clubs and the vaporization of city pensions. And one recent mayor groped his way through the female staff like a lost boy in a darkened fun-house. I know—these shenanigans make a burg pretty lovable especially considering that the city council formally suspended the use of the official motto: "America's finest city." Still this merriment isn't sufficient to induce me to hover in their criminal air for long. I feel cornered in San Diego (but not half so cornered as they must feel in Tijuana) so onward to parts north.

CORONADO

Across the bay north of San Diego is the island city of Coronado and there we find the Hotel del Coronado, or The Del, built in 1888. Back then it was the biggest and most opulent resort in the world. The Del is a Beach Victorian and featured the first use of commercial electric lighting which replaced the open flame of gaslights. The installation of the electrical system was presided over by Thomas Edison personally. The Del also had the first illuminated Christmas tree.



Might not sound like much but this was a major victory for the new incandescent technology which many folks distrusted. At the time Christmas trees were often bedecked with real candles and after the Santa-parents tootled off to bed some of these trees would catch fire burning the homes and families to the ground as the children dreamed of sugar plum fairies.

With 16, so far, the hotel has had more U.S. presidents visit than any other hotel outside of Washington D.C. Oh, President Obama, your room is ready...

During Prohibition the hotel was at its zenith and was adopted by the Hollywood crowd as well as prosperous folks from the east escaping their unreasonable winters. L. Frank Baum wrote many of the Oz books by the pool over a hundred years ago. L. Frank was a prolific writer. In fact his output was so terrific that he wrote 32 books and after he died a woman bought the franchise from the publisher and she wrote 10 more Oz books. You would think that dying ruins your career but Elvis and Michael Jackson are still pulling down some serious coinage.

L. Frank often spoke of the Del as being the living embodiment of Oz. The Del has the typical ballroom found in these places and has been the location of a great many historic events from weddings of the famous to musical revues and stage plays. L. Frank himself was crazy about the world of the theater and in the late 19-teens he traveled with his stage extravaganza; an elaborate multi-media production so complex that it busted him twice and he had to keep churning out the Oz books at a furious pace to keep the repo men at bay.

The story gets better. Toto was a real dog owned by Mrs. Wallis Simpson and it has long been rumored that Prince Edward met the American Wallis Simpson at the Del, thus leading to his eventual abdication of the English crown allowing them to marry one another. The abdication was necessary because she was a commoner and *land sakes!* she had been d-i-v-o-r-c-e-d. This tainted romance was a *huge* deal then. Today the subject is as over as the

"And her little dog too!"

Mickey Rooney Fan Club and no one gives a rat's brass what the Heir to the Throne does as long as he doesn't dress up like a Nazi at a costume party...oh it seems one of the princes did do that.

Anyway, in 1910 L. Frank was conducting one of his stage marvels, this one called *The Perils of a Mechanical House* which by all accounts was pretty fabulous. It demonstrated how the modern age would be one of care-free bliss as has proven to be the case. Tables popped out of the floor, chandeliers burst into light as they descended from the ceiling while a primitive robot cruised around the drawing room much like the character of L. Frank's book, *Rinkitink of Oz*. Most of the gadgets worked well enough but the spectacular production



Jack Lemon, Tony Curtis and Marilyn in *Some Like It Hot*

required an elaborate control system which the Oz Master operated from behind a curtain on stage. At one point Toto, who had the run of the place, darted out onto the stage with the frantic impresario chasing after him.

From the early 20s all Hollywood came. Garbo, Valentino, Bogart, Gable and Lombard. Later Arthur Miller was there with his wife Marilyn Monroe. L. Frank wasn't the only writer to make this his winter home. Edgar Rice Burroughs wrote his Tarzan series there and Sinclair Lewis and Upton Sinclair once accidentally checked into the other's room. Ray Bradbury wrote *The Martian Chronicles* at the Del and Charles Schultz drew countless Snoopy cartoons and gave them to the children who gathered around him. Babe Ruth used to pop flies to the kids on the beach and



Charlie Chaplin could be seen with Douglas Fairbanks turning somersaults into the pool. So many folks have committed suicide at the Del that they practically have a separate floor for all the ghosts.

What about the celebrities of today? Well, since the advent of jet travel they all go to the Med.

On the Eureka you can open the windows and I begged the pilot to let me touch the top of the highest turret of The Magnificent Del but noooo. So picky these pilots.

"We simply have to send some money to the Mission Roof Fund." cruised past Mission San Juan Capistrano.

At the mission they will tell you that the fabled swallows come every year on March 19th, St. Joseph's Day. And then they leave promptly on the morning of October 23, the birthday of San Juan de Capistrano.

It certainly is remarkable that these birds know the birth date of the saint for which the place is named. Now I've been in enough churches in Rome where they display dubious relics like the third finger from the left hand of St. Teresa or a sliver of the True Cross, but this swallow business is completely ver-

ifiable. Maybe there is a rational explanation? Do the mission authorities use some sort of persuasion to lure the birds and loud noises to drive them off. Or maybe, just maybe—it's a miracle.



Here's the miracle: by Oct 23 the tourists have left and the swallows leave when they are good and ready. Not only that but in 2010 the swallows bypassed the church completely, as they sometimes do, and flew directly to the Orange County Club. Much nicer digs. Oh, and San Juan Day is in June. Those crazy swallows; don't they know nothin'?

SAN CLEMENTE

Until G. W. Bush sashayed into the White House everybody's favorite political goat was Richard Milhous Nixon. I once named a cat Millhouse because on a cat it's funny (my cat spelled it with two lls). On a president...well, it's still pretty funny. But there wasn't much else very funny about Nixon. He tried hard to kill me but in the end I had him thrown out of office to live in shame and dishonor in a shack on the beach. I know it was more than just a shack and we did have to pay for it as well as keeping his staff in hot dogs and Roloids but it was worth it to kick him the heck out of Dodge.

Nixon bought the beach house in 1968 at the height



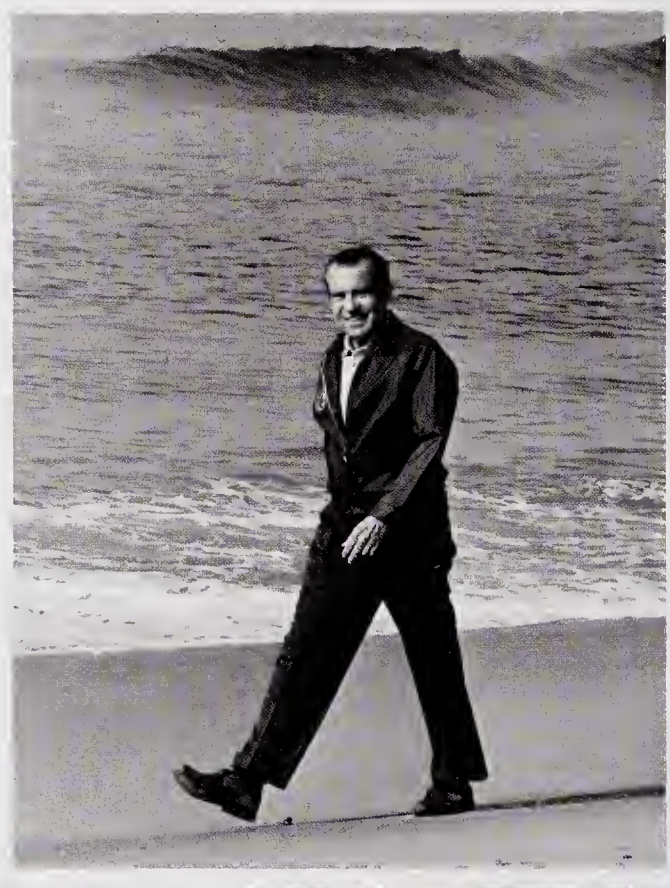
of his popularity. It was called the Western White House and leaders from all over came to see him like the headmen from Japan (Sato), Russia (Brezhnev), Mexico (Diaz) but after Nixon's fall the visitors were pretty much confined to a disenchanted Henry

Nixon with lapdog Bebe and a tree

Kissinger and his confused bag boy, Bebe Rebozo, a man with a sillier name even than Milhous.

Nixon was a truly vile man and a catastrophic president. Ooooo, *he* opened Chinaaa... A lot of good that has done us. If China was still stumbling around in the Dark Ages we might actually have to make toaster ovens right here in the U.S.A. Nixon left us in a shambles—morally and economically—and paved the road to rampant deregulation. But he signed the bill establishing the EPA and OSHA you say? (I sign a lot of papers too but does this make me a good president? I rest my case.) Nixon claimed he stayed up late at night trying to help 'the little people' but really he plotted to *mess with America*, which would have been an apt campaign slogan for him.

On the other hand his actual catch phrase 'Nixon's the One' served pretty well as he tried to weasel his way out of a little problem at the Watergate Hotel. Nixon tried to convince people he wasn't involved by looking us right in the face and with sweat pooling over his reptilian little eyes told us "I am not a crook."



"I luuve the feeling of sand in ma wingtips."

Like so many zigs in the historical zag everything is hooked to everything else. One domino in Nixon's fall was pushed over by Dick Tuck who so riled the president that it led to the vaporization of Nixon's presidency and the wholesale imprisonment of Nixon's henchmen. Tuck was a prankster but he was also a serious political operative and was with Bobby Kennedy in the ambulance when Bobby Kennedy died.

Nixon's ax man, Attorney General John Mitchell, had the bad taste to try to put a beating on me during the student revolts at Berkeley in 1969-70. Biggg mistake John. But did I really have Nixon thrown out of office? Did Mitchell actually have it in for me? Damn straight! As a student protester my name was in a file from 1970 onward as "a person of interest" and I was branded a "campus agitator." Not a coveted inclusion on Nixon's Enemies List perhaps but still an achievement I can be proud of. I was a longhaired draft dodger like Clinton and Bush Jr. We are all still dern proud to say it. Well, at least I am.

So how did Tuck let the air out of this elephant? Tuck first met Nixon at UC Santa Barbara where Nixon was busy accusing his rival for a congressional seat of being a communist. Oh Richard, how 1950s of you. Tuck was a PR functionary for Nixon's opposition and he thought that Richard needed some time in the woodshed so Tuck snatched up a pick handle and went after Nixon every chance he got. Tuck's first stunt was to invite Nixon to speak to a crowd in an auditorium on campus that accommodated 2,000 but invited only 12 people. After Tuck gave a long-winded somewhat comic introduction the flustered Nixon mumbled and left the stage in unconcealed rage.

A month later at a San Francisco rally in Chinatown Tuck changed a sign written in Chinese used as the backdrop in the TV news shot from "Welcome" to "What about your illegal loans to cronies?" At another rally several very pregnant women paraded back and forth carrying signs declaring, "Nixon's the One."

My favorite Tuck prank involved Nixon addressing a rally from the back of a train platform (Oh Richard, how 1930s of you) and Dick Tuck, dressed as conductor, waved to the real conductor to chug away just as the other Dick was getting started with his speech. All this is pretty mild stuff but Nixon was furious at Tuck and is heard on the famous tapes ordering his men to "get this guy." It was then that Haldeman, the chief of staff, and his band of hooligans hired some inept burglars to break into the Democratic Party Headquarters in DC on that fateful night at the Watergate. *Score and win* for Dick Tuck! R. Milhous, *yoourrr out!*



Nixon ordered these hilarious palace guard uniforms for the White House



"Damn it Dick! You're using too much water again."

ORANGE COUNTY

Orange County has a lot going on so let's take a slight detour in from the shoreline to see some of the sites. It is here that the end of civilization is well underway. No county has been more badly managed except for a few in the Deep South after the Civil War and they had a pretty good excuse. Orange County encompasses some of the wealthiest cities in the world and is known for its radical conservatism coupled with phenomenal fiscal mismanagement. In 1994 this 6th most populous county in the nation declared bankruptcy and civic services quickly unraveled. The only option short of hanging a closed sign on the joint was for the Feds to ride in with crates of cash and bail them out.

A bailout was such an anathema to the conservative creed that residents Reginald and Trixy Silverspoon rolled up their Gucci pantaloons and rushed forth into the streets dumping asphalt in the potholes and picked up the trash...ah, well no, that didn't happen. The citizens accepted the federal do-re-me and moved onto the yacht while the Mexican laborers got the place back on line.

Many (perhaps most) of the thriving businesses in Orange County are gigantic churches, Christian 'universities' and holy-roller radio stations. Now as most folks know worshipping God is tax exempt. I find this puzzling as I would think that of all entities God would be pretty flush.

Rick Warren is in OC with his Saddleback Church complex and he can bring in 20,000 customers in a good week (a crowd bested only by the In N Out Burger down the street). But unlike In N Out, Rick takes reservations. No really, you can get reserved seating. Saddleback began at a local high school back in 1980 when you could still perform church services at a public school. In fact you could smoke in classrooms and carry a pistol to church in those days...come

to think of it you can still carry a gun to church. But going to heaven being led by a guy who is so fat bothers me. But I suppose ol Buddha got pretty fat so there you go. Rick, stay away from the double double double at the In N Out.

(Then Rick lost 90 lbs pretty much wrecking my story but trust me I know how this works. Like Mike Huckabee he'll find the missing 90.)

Finally we come to Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral. The architecture of the church is a cross between an Abu DhaBi shopping mall and



Bring sunglasses

PeeWee's Playhouse. Of course 'Crystal Cathedral' is merely alliterative and does not mean it is a cathedral in the sense of being a church where one would find a bishop's official seat. Nor is it made of crystal. It is however the place where in a parody on *The Simpsons* a nude Homer is dragged across the glass to the horror of the congregation below.

The church is real enough and seats 3,000. Robert is an old hand at the microphone (privately he calls it the *moneyphone*). Prior to building this atrocious swindle he used to run his confidence game more modestly out of a defunct drive-in movie theater in Garden Grove. Bob broadcast his sermon over the speakers people hung from their car windows and many folks went to the service in bathing suits so they could go straight to the beach afterwards. Now that's my kind of church! The Church of God and Sand.

In 2010 the Devil came through the front door of the church and took a front row seat. It seems Bob fell behind on his car payments a bit. \$45 million behind. The whole shebang went upside down and they filed chapter 7. Bob was in deep trouble but instead of sizing down to a smaller beach house he exhorted (or extorted) his flock to double tithe. Instead of forking over 10% of your income he now sets the bar at 20%. Hey, a man's got to eat. Since tithe means tenth I think they have to pick another term.

This situation must have made Bob doubly sad because he couldn't cheat on the taxes because churches don't pay them. This is the system where the janitor (and everyone else) pays to keep the civic power grid functioning and the 65 quintillion light bulbs in the Crystal use this infrastructure for free. I know, I know, PG&E is a private company but the point is churches are nonprofit (hilarious, yes?) corporations, or as they are now known *people*, and be blessed with all the benefits of liberty (which costs a lot believe me) but pay nothing for the privilege. They are busy saving souls you say and helping the poor. Sure they help the poor. Take the Vatican for instance. They laid out \$4.7 billion to the poor in 2012 out of their 170 billion dollar budget. Just over 2%. OK maybe those chincy Italians pinch the Euro pretty tight but the Crystal gave 50% more than the

Vatican to charity, almost 3%—though an investigation during the bankruptcy uncovered that the charities were actually Bob's friends and family. The rest of the money went to window washers and bankruptcy lawyers.

But it isn't entirely about God and Money in Orange County. It is also the place where Knott's Berry Farm was born. In 1932 Knott's Berry Farm really was a boysenberry farm stand which soon morphed into a restaurant. The crowds on their way to and from the beaches overwhelmed the place so the owner built a mechanical volcano which steamed and roared every few minutes entertaining the customers as they waited for a table. Over time they added an authentic fake ghost town (or a real town with fake ghosts), some poky rides and all sorts of things



Walter Knott commuting to work



The Beb takes a load off

had been a big deal host in the 50s with his *Kid's Say The Darnedest Things* TV show ('America's dad' Knockemout Bill Cosby hosted the same show later). Kids would contort some syntax and Art would stare with mock befuddlement into the camera as the peanut gallery chortled. This was before TV people had eleventy-five writers scripting every spontaneous reaction. Art had perfected the WTF look into the lens and it was pretty much his entire act.

Art told me the following: A young cartoon animator came to see him one day and thought he could outdo that Knott's fellow so Walt Disney began planning Disneyland just down the street from Knott's. Walt had Art out to see the construction site and asked Art if he cared to invest. Art said he laughed all the way home. Home being Los Altos Hills. Later Art was able to regain control of his funny bone when he saw that Walt had a hit on his hands but then it was too late to invest. You older folks remember Art as a sweet, mildly funny gentleman but more than one of his Bohemian Club comrades have told me about the ear reddening blue act he did at the Grove.

In fairness to Art it should be noted that the first Disneyland prospectus explained that it was to be primarily a shopping mall and would draw customers to buy tropical birds, exotic aquarium fish and miniature horses. This approach was scrapped before it opened.

It had long been rumored that fast food was invented in Anaheim when Carl Karcher opened a junior version of his Carl's restaurant—Carl's Junior. Modern technology makes these gentle lies transparent and it's easy to discover that White Castle predated Carl by 35 years. And White Castle really should wait in line behind Horn and Hardart which opened in Philly in 1902. This restaurant featured glittering bronze walls with hundreds of little doors—each with a sandwich or confectionery behind the glass. They looked more like columbariums than restaurants, each niche holding a sandwich rather than grandma's ashes. I remember being in one in NYC in the 70s and it was mildly amusing to be inside a gigantic food vending machine feeling at once old fashioned and modern.

The most famous conservative to grace the shores of very conservative Orange County was John Wayne. He was long a familiar site in Newport Harbor tooling around in his 136 foot converted minesweeper, Wild Goose. Newport Harbor is the one depicted in the opening sequence of

made of 90% sugar and 10% food coloring. I luuved the place as a kid.

But now Knott's Berry Farm is where you go if you don't want to subject yourself to the trauma of attempting Disneyland. I haven't been to Disneyland for years but I have heard that a visit there is like being at the Invasion of Normandy but at least in WW2 they paid you to go. The lines can be overcome if you ride around in a wheelchair like Justin Beiber and others who pretend to be handicapped.

About a thousand years ago I met Art Linkletter who





Gilligan's Island shipwrecked Minnow

of survival. There were great numbers of people who needed new land, and the Indians were selfishly trying to keep it for themselves." Owww, Duke!

A good many other movie stars kept their boats in the harbor at Newport. Errol Flynn famously entertained young (very) women on his sloop Sirocco. Bogie and Betty had a 55 foot schooner named Santana which for many years has been on San Francisco Bay and is now owned by Eric (Google) and Wendy Schmidt.

Gilligan's Island (once the tune starts playing in your head it will eat your brain and spit out the bone. "There once was a...). This is good time to burn this book. It gets much worse. You have been warned.

Anyway, John was known as a pillar of The Right with such statements as "I believe in white supremacy until the blacks are educated to a point of responsibility. I don't believe giving authority and positions of leadership and judgment to irresponsible people. I don't feel we did wrong in taking this great country away from (the Native Americans)... Our so-called stealing of this country from them was just a matter



"These cigarettes make us look cool, yes?"

SIGNAL HILL AND LONG BEACH

Since there were no airship facilities at Disneyland we spun round and headed back to the beach cruising over Signal Hill. The promontory was long used by Indians to kindle signal fires which could be seen by their country cousins on Catalina about 30 miles away (there is a song: *26 miles across the sea. Santa Catalina is a-waiting for me.* The song is not correct, it's 30 miles). So what does one Indian tell another with a signal fire? Perhaps, "Hey, having brunch with the

Leaping Gopher clan on Thursday, a week. Y'all come and bring an appetizer. Dress is casual." No, more like, "Still breathing over here."

After the signal fires and the Indians were extinguished the place became farmland until the early 1900s when Fatty Arbuckle and Buster Keaton starred in movies made at the



Balboa Studio which was built next to the beach. The movie people complained about the sulfurous smell of the place but the real estate was cheap so they cranked out two-reelers until the sleeping beast beneath their feet woke with a start when a drilled hole erupted with a detonation heard round the world. A spectacular geyser of oil spewed forth in the biggest gusher to date. In a matter of months the entire area was covered with derricks and in an instant it became the most productive oil field on earth. It seems that the hill part of Signal Hill is positively loaded with Texas Tea and oilmen swarmed all over the precinct poking their beaks into this underground sea of greasy money.



My mother's second husband, Walter, (or Mad Wally as my sister and I secretly named him), was related to a first family of Signal Hill. In 1896 his great uncle Charlie Steadman was a storekeeper in Long Beach when it was discovered that the innocuous hill a couple of miles away in Huntington Beach was in fact an oil dome. Charlie and his neighbors came a runnin'. At first there was a murmur from the farmers that all the derricks made the place look a bit unruly. The complainers either had their mouths stuffed with cash or were escorted to the town limits costumed in one of the great civic tools of persuasion—tar and feathers. They had a sufficiency of tar after all. The place certainly was unkempt and the work so dirty that the roughnecks sat on newspapers wearing tiny shorts as they ate lunch because clothes were rendered useless by the constant deluge





Must be how they paid for the boat

oil wells. Take Beverly Hills High School for instance. For nearly a hundred years they have been pumping from multiple wells on the campus and this originally funded the Swim Gym depicted in the film *It's a Wonderful Life*. Really? They couldn't have found oil under Compton High? The wells at BH High still bring in hundreds of thousands a year.

By the 1920s oil prospecting had come a long way since the first well

of oil. After the first strikes so much oil came in that the price crashed to 99 cents a barrel and this included the barrel. They are still ferociously pumping and Signal Hill today has that old timey look with rocking horse pumps everywhere and the whole place smells like everyone is roofing on the same day.

In fancier neighborhoods around LA they take pains to conceal the



"I can still kinda see it."

was drilled in 1896

using the sharpened end of a eucalyptus log. But oil from California was far from eastern markets and there were no pipelines. This spawned the era of the oil tankers, the first one of which set sail in the mid 20s. At this point the Los Angeles area was coming into itself as the place where the action was by mixing oil with newly captured water from the north. But it was the emergence of Hollywood with its roots in the primordial moving pictures made at the beach that really caused the municipal mantle of the 'Queen of the West' to move from San Francisco to Los Angeles.



The Swim Gym just before they fall in the pool

Long Beach is a city that tries hard. Jillions of millions of dollars have been dumped into the downtown to spit shine the place but it still looks like the poor country cousin of Las Vegas (without the gambling, drugs and whores) so it is nearly devoid of visitors. The ocean liner Queen Mary is marooned in the shallows in the front of this beige metropolis, the ship dreaming no doubt of a more glamorous era. The beach was delightfully seedy in the early 60s when I used to ride my bike down from Palos Verdes to the Pike in Long Beach. This was a decaying amusement park, old, even when Disneyland was built. It was grimy, dangerous and had even fewer patrons than the vacant streets have today. In short, the perfect place for us kids to run wild. You could get a tattoo if you dared and if you were brave enough you might even hook up with unsavory women. I'm not saying hookers, just wanton teenage girls; god love 'em. The only other visitors seemed to be disenchanted swabbies prowling the boardwalk in their curious costumes.

At 14 we speculated that we might be able to get inked with *Anchors Away* if we lied about our age but we were afraid the needles might have cooties (turned out that was true) or perhaps we would be captured by the MPs having been mistaken for sailors who jumped ship or we might get shanghaied onto a tramp steamer. All hoped for possibilities.

In the Funhouse at the Pike the supposed mummified corpse of a desperado named Elmer McCurdy had been hanging stiffly from a noose for a century. A placard proclaimed that he had been gunned down in a bank robbery in the 1860s (hummm, shot *and* hung?) and now he was whittling away at eternity as a two-bit sideshow attraction. As teenagers we were wise to the con but happy to sling popcorn at the dangling Elmer.

In 1976 a TV crew was filming an episode of *The Six Million Dollar Man* and the director wasn't pleased with the dummy hanging from a rope in the middle of his shot so he told one of his PAs to move it. When the assistant grabbed Elmer, his arm snapped off (Elmer's, not the PA's) exposing the ulna of an authentic mummy. Discovering that it was a real dead guy the joint became a crime scene and, sadly, the management was forced to remove ol Elmer because the sign was telling the truth. *Noooooo!*



"Ohhh, Elmer you don't look so good."

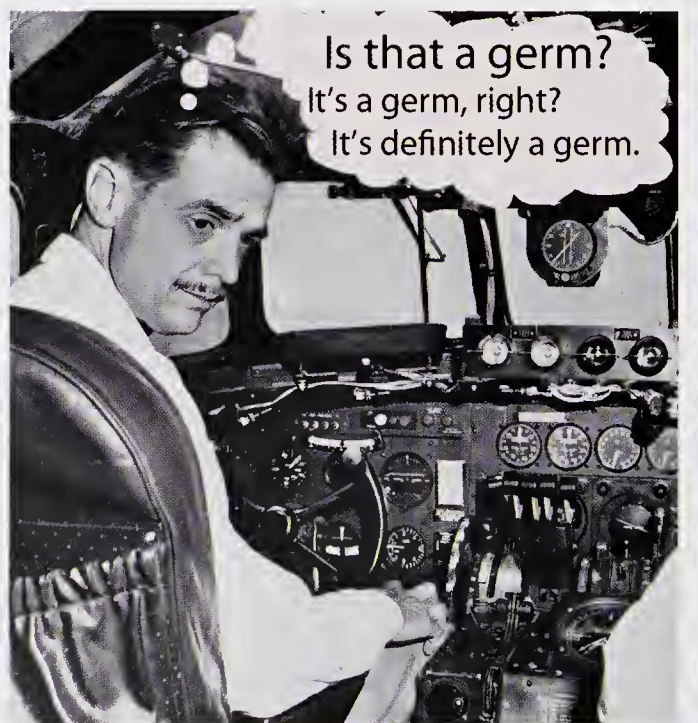
Television, video games and theme parks with no dead bodies hanging around killed off the beach sleaze we so treasured but at least there are still a sufficiency of joints to get tattoos injected and legions of loose women.

Long Beach is also home to some of the most important events in aeronautical history. No, not Amelia and that crowd. I'm talking Howard Hughes. Now Howard was a curious bag of mixed nuts. His story went like this: inherit a sizable fortune—turn it into a bigger fortune—invent and fly some pretty crazy airplanes—get into the movie business to hit on the babes and then become a notorious recluse with a predilection for lying naked on a bed covered

with Kleenex in the penthouse of your Vegas hotel, save your urine in jars, send for Chinese takeout, become psychotic about germs and wait for the Grim Reaper.

In 1940, well into the wartime buildup, Howard found time to design a pushup bra for Jane Russell. Looking at the picture I can't detect any sign of it but maybe it's just that good.

During the War he had yet to become fully unspooled and, after working with Jane,



"Hold on tight, Howard."



Note the shadow of the photo aircraft

concentrated on building airplanes to give what-to to the Huns. One of his contracts was to build a troop carrier which would fly over the oceanic shipping lanes where a terrific number of soldiers and sailors were being lost to submarine attacks. The H4 Hercules was built of wood and was designed to carry 750 fully equipped men.

Ridiculed as the Flying Lumberyard, and later The Spruce Goose (though made of birch), it was criticized in Congress as being both unnecessary and unflyable. Then, inconveniently, the war ended before the plane was finished. "Damn, damn, damn!" lamented our hero.

Howard, however, had blood-in-his-eye and in 1947 finally finished the plane. Howard took the stick on her only flight, taking off from Long Beach Harbor, and flew 30 feet above the water for about a mile and a half. He then parked the Goose in an air conditioned hanger with, at one point, 300 guards and attendants to keep it in flying shape.

Howard decamped to come unglued in Nevada while the lonely bird sat in its nest for years until the Disney people bought it. By 1962 there was a skeleton staff of 50 or so left to look after the plane and this for a plane that did not fly. Then, in a bonehead move the Disneyites sold it to a collector before Long Beach had its shaky renaissance. In the early 90s the Goose was dismantled and shipped to the middle of a vineyard in Oregon where it was remantled. I've seen it there and it is *definitely* worth a visit. Flying lumberyard indeed. Ha-lareous.

But on to a true aeronautical hero. One day in a backyard full of drunken friends, Larry Walters lashed dozens of helium filled weather balloons to a lawn chair. Larry had secured his helium from California Toy Time, a party balloon company and with a beer in one hand and a pellet gun in the other he yelled "release" to his ground crew who promptly cut him loose from the bumper of a truck. The plan was to float serenely a few hundred feet above the ground to the Sierras a hundred miles away and then shoot out a balloon or two and gradually settle back to the ground. Larry miscalculated a tad and he positively ripped out of the yard, rising at over a 1,000 feet a minute (in the process losing his glasses making the eyesight thing an even bigger problem) and was immediately swallowed by the clouds.

Soon Larry drifted into the Long Beach Airport flyway and was reported by two airliners as they zipped past him at about 8,000 feet.

The rig began to sway wildly as he barged into the Jetstream and he became distraught about

the possibility of falling out of the chair and plunging to a dramatic end. What no seat belt, Larry? No, and he held on tighter than ever. Finally our intrepid adventurer began to feel light headed from the Pabst Blue Ribbon, lack of oxygen and dimming vision so he blearily pointed the gun at the balloons but he fumbled and down it went. Larry watched with glum resignation as his trusty pea shooter spun end over end into the arms of some lucky kid several miles below. And Larry kept on rising. At about 16,000 feet with the drop in pressure the balloons began to expand and pop. Sayonara, Larry...but wait.

The beer gone and his nerves shot, Larry made a feeble call to the FAA from his handheld radio and said he was in trouble and to tell his girlfriend he was OK (this recording is available online). Now above 19,000 feet he was far from OK and it was here he should have commenced his dramatic plunge into a Larry-shaped hole 12 feet deep. In fact, he

descended rather slowly. But as he dropped below the clouds he realized he was drifting toward and in fact into the 120,000 volt main power line serving Long Beach. Remarkably he still didn't die, though he did blackout much of the city and he certainly should have been a blackened Larry-shaped crisp, incinerated in a fireball of sparks but miraculously he ended up dangling 70 feet from the ground white knuckling the chair from which he was about to fall. The sparking wires fried the balloons and the ropes fell all around him. So, gathering the lines, he slid down into the eager arms of the police, the FAA, his girlfriend and a throng of cheering supporters. Like Disney giving up the Goose, Larry gave away his aircraft to some random kid instead of the Smithsonian where it would be today because later they really did ask for it.

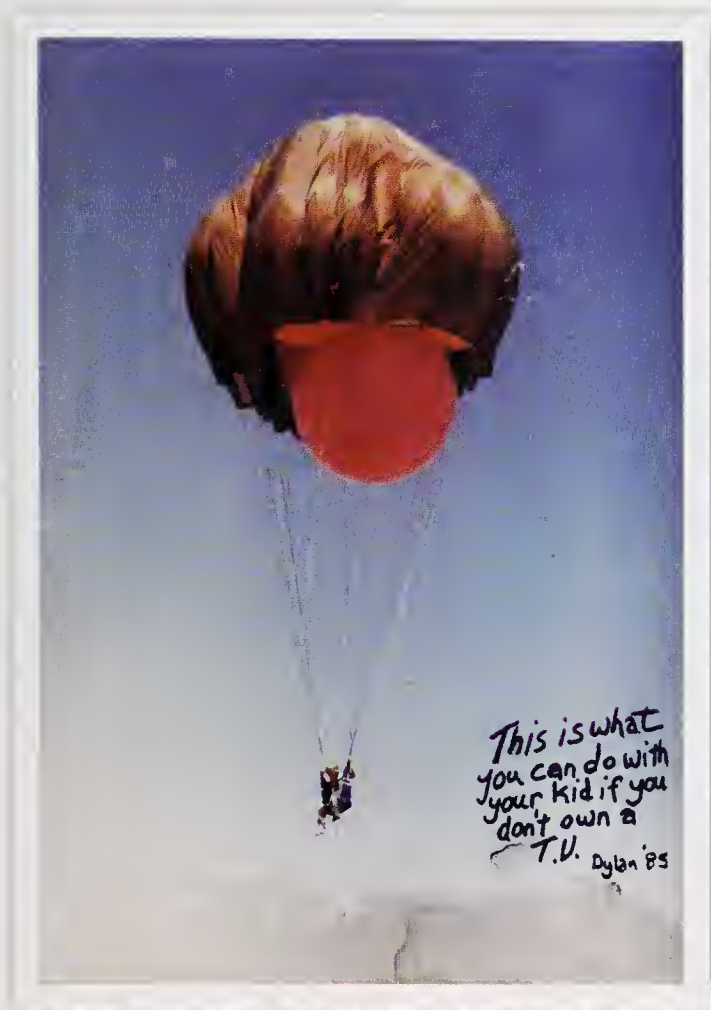
The authorities tried to throw the book at Larry but their aim was thwarted by all the laughter so he got off with a small fine and a warning to not do it again which he readily agreed to as his hair had practically turned white. He was forever shaken by his little odyssey.

I always loved this story and so did my Cousin Will. Will calculated that with enough helium tanks and a parachute full of weather balloons I could fly like Larry. So we mounted an expedition to the Mojave Desert in a Winnebago towing a trailer with 16 full sized helium tanks. We were a bit disappointed when we unpacked the WW2 parachute to discover that someone had cut off the shrouds. So it seemed we had a parachute but no lines. One in our party had come by car so he drove the 60 miles back to the town of Mojave to buy all the clothesline in town. Meanwhile we started to inflate the weather balloons and tie them to the bumper.

It was immediately apparent that the calculation that I would be able to fly was off by a factor of 10. We realized that we couldn't fly anything heavier than a 5 year old. It so happened that we had an extra 5 year old so we decided to fly him.



The ascent of man



"Hey, put down the gun, Daddy!"

belligerent so my friend Dave swiveled the carbine in their direction and in his best imitation of a redneck said, "You best be goin'" and they peeled off down the road in a rooster tail of dust.

We had had a decent run to this point and we thought it might be spoiled if it involved officials with more guns than us so we pulled the boy earthward and uncinched him. I stepped into the seat to keep this kludgery from taking off and was knocked to the ground as the balloon filled parachute bounded across the desert in the now substantial wind with me stuck halfway in the seat being dragged through the brush. With the idea of deflating the rig Dave started shooting at the balloons but it turns out that they don't explode and a tiny bullet hole has no immediate effect.

Soon enough the brush caught me up and we got the contraption deflated. We decided we had better leave as soon as possible because we could see the tourists were approaching a town in the distance and we *had* been shooting in their general direction. But the joke was on them because the town of Panamint was a ghost town and there was no one there. We got away clean.

Years later I happened to be in Panamint and was just a bit surprised to find a working pay phone in the middle of this abandoned town. Yikes!

Our flight worked out great and I wish I could tell you that Larry went on to greater glory but like Howard he went crazy and gave himself cranial lead poisoning one night out in the woods. It just goes to show you that, billionaire or out of work truck driver, everyone's pain is real.

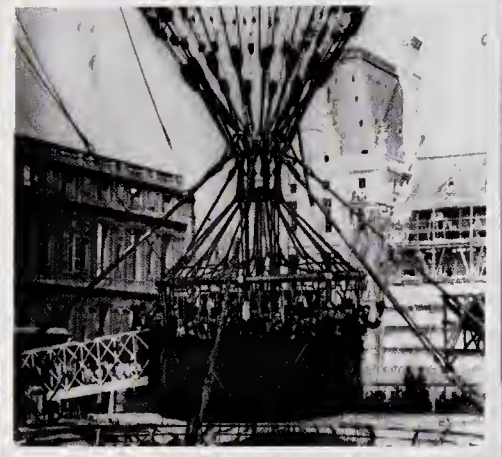
When air is heated it expands and creates lift. This effect was known by the Chinese who made sky lanterns as far back as the 3rd century BC. The first untethered manned flight was made on November 21, 1783, in Paris by Jean-François de Rozier and François d'Arlandes in a hot air balloon built by the Montgolfier brothers. On that day the age of flight began.

Hot air was the rage in the early days but in the 19th century balloonists switched to gas. Not

When the ropes showed up and we got our rig airworthy it looked pretty good. We tied the kid to the seat from a swing set and were ready to go. We realized though that if we dropped the single tether we would never see the boy again. We had plenty of spare kids but his mother was there and he was my first born so we secured his future with a second line and unreeled him into the sky. The rig had some serious lift and with the wind that was now kicking up we thought it prudent to get the rifle from the camper to selectively shoot out the balloons if he somehow got loose. We figured he was in an open parachute and would come down without a great deal of trouble. The problem was he saw the gun and this business of shooting the balloons worried him and he started to cry. What-a-baby, right?

Just then some tourists pulled up and sized up the situation with remarkable clarity. They started to berate us for child endangerment and kicked up a real fuss. Somehow they failed to realize that the gun was a safety measure and besides we were actually decent shots. They became increasingly

helium of course but gas extracted from coal which was a mix of hydrogen, carbon monoxide and methane. Gas lighting began to be used in the early 1800s and it created a sensation. People think of the steam engine and other mechanical systems as ushering in the Industrial Revolution and gas lighting is often forgotten as a high tech marvel of the age. But by illuminating the crime-



French balloonists in Paris 1880s

ridden streets of cities in England the hoodlums shrunk into the dwindling shadows and factories could be kept running in the evening. People were able read more easily and gas lighting reduced the all too common house fires from oil lamps and candles. Lighter than air flight in the 19th century caused a sensation too. Although there was never much practical use for the technology they spent forever to find one. There isn't much you can do to steer a free-flying balloon but by rising and falling in the contrary winds a certain amount of control is possible. By the mid part of the century steam engines were fitted to balloons like the very first one launched in San Mateo in 1869, a replica of which is in the Hiller Aviation Museum in San Carlos. These were all commercial failures until Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin came along.

Richard Holmes covers the history of 18th and 19th century history of this type of flying in his book *Falling Upward*. I read a lot of books and I can say this is one of the 5 best books I have ever read on any subject. Richard points out that during the Franco Prussian War in 1870 the Prussians surrounded the citizens of Paris in an attempt to starve them out. This was when the chef at *Cafés Voisin* of Paris famously cooked and served the animals from the zoo. He featured such dishes as la terrine d'antilope aux truffes and consommé d'éléphant. Me, I think it's crazy to make consume out of an elephant — on the other hand it really does stretch as a soup.

When the zoo animals gave out the chef moved on to these taste treats: Consommé de cheval au millet (horse); Brochettes de foie de chien à la maître



"What? 25 centimes for a rat? I never pay more than 10"!

d'hôtel (dog); Emincé de rable de chat sauce mayonnaise (cat). Of course this being France they also had wine pairings including a Xérès Mouton Rothschild Cabernet 1846 to go with anaconda and a Romanée Conti Pinot 1858 with Norwegian rat ragout. I prefer the '68 (lacking that, a 67) but after all, there *was* a war on.

The Parisian's were understandably glum as they were completely cut off until an enterprising photographer/aeronaut came up with the idea of sending balloons aloft with messages. Carrier pigeons were hired to return replies. This worked amazingly well because the balloons rose above the range of the Prussian cannons and only 2 of 66 flights went awry. One problem with the scheme was that pigeons are basically lazy and adamantly refused to carry more than an ounce of information. So the photographer hit upon the terrific idea of photographing walls with words pinned up and then shrinking them down on photographic film. This was then rolled up and this microscopic film put in a tiny pouch attached to the pigeon's drumstick. Voila! Microfilm was invented. This, along with elephant soup and loving Jerry Lewis are the reasons I adore the French. Keep in mind that ballooning was then the only way to explore the sky but it made folks skittish. There was a rumor that the air was poisonous at high altitude which is, in effect, correct.

The French were simply crazy for ballooning. Their balloons in the late 1700s were the first aircraft of any kind and by the mid 1800s they owned the sky.

Adventurers took to the air in all sorts of places from Africa to the Andes. George Armstrong Custer of Little Big Horn fame was once a Civil War test pilot in the Balloon Corps. These balloons



were tethered at 5,000 feet and used as observation platforms to snoop over enemy lines. They were filled with hydrogen from generators built at the Washington Navy Yard by master joiners who fashioned contraptions of copper plumbing and tanks which, when filled with sulfuric acid and iron filings, would produce hydrogen. 7 Union balloons and were commissioned as naval ships. The gondola held an observer and a telegraph operator. One was launched from a barge essentially becoming the first aircraft carrier.

The South got in on the act as well but they had trouble getting gas so their first balloon used hot air. They also were short on suitable cloth. Confederate

Major General James Longstreet said in a letter, "While we were longing for balloons that poverty denied us, a genius arose and suggested that we send out and get every silk dress in the Confederacy to make a balloon. It was done and soon we had a great patchwork ship for use in the Seven Days Campaign. One day it was on a steamer down the James River when the tide went out and left it high and dry on a sandbar. The Federals gathered it in, and with it the last silk dress in the Confederacy. This was the meanest trick of the war ..." The shreds of the balloon were given away as souvenirs in Washington.



Rebel petticoat fabric

Borschberg, his aviation partner, built a solar powered airplane named the Solar Impulse with the aim of flying around the world. I was privileged to be part of the Silicon Valley effort to promote their cross-country flight in 2013 from Sunnyvale to NYC.

Bertrand comes from a long line of adventurers. His father was the first to descend to 39,000', the deepest part of the ocean,

Explorers employed balloons as well. One trip to the North Pole didn't go so well. The photos and bodies were found on the ice 20 years later.

A ship like the Eureka could make the trip to the North Pole with ease today. In fact a friend of mine circumnavigated the globe in a hot air-helium hybrid balloon in 1999. Later Bertrand Piccard and André



"Give me a minute. I can fix this."



Stylish and practical

in the 1960s in the bathysphere Trieste. His grandfather Auguste Piccard and Paul Kipfer were the first people to go to what was then considered outer space (51,000') thereby inventing the pressurized cabin and the wicker crash helmet. Although they were Swiss they took off from Germany where the then FAA required them to wear crash helmets so they used the seats from the cabin to do double duty. Goofy *and* krazeely impractical. Just my sort of guys.

WILMINGTON

We bade Long Beach goodbye and traversed an unseen border below. We may not have spotted a dotted line but it was clear we had left civilization behind as we knew it.

Beneath us was a true horror show. Wilmington might look like hell but it is where the very first Der Wienerschnitzel (now just Weinerschnitzel) hot dog was peddled so I guess there are reasons to celebrate. When I say it looks like hell I mean the classic Dante 9th Circle vision of Hell. The place is almost completely covered by a gigantic oil refinery which exhales smoke, stench and flames at every quarter. There are 7 refineries and it also sports one of the largest oil fields in the United States. In San Francisco if someone drops a piece of artisan cheese on the sidewalk a hazmat cleanup team is on the scene pronto but in Wilmington the guck oozes in the gutters next to the roadway. As kids we were simply amazed that such a place existed just a half dozen miles from tony Rolling Hills where I ran in the gutters. I am still amazed. Everywhere you see uncountable miles of creosote begummed pipes, saxophone towers and seeping metal tanks—the entirety looking as if it has been designed by an acid tripping Escher enthusiast. And this is in the better part of town.



The Der is around here somewhere

Wilmington also features a federal prison on the appropriately named Terminal Island (once called Deadman's Island for a lone grave said to be there), a mostly man-made rectilinear piece of paradise in Los Angeles Harbor. They have had their share of celebrity cons including Charles

Manson. In 1974, LSD guru Timothy Leary and Watergate co-conspirator G. Gordon Liddy were incarcerated there at the same time. It used to be a coed joint but the ladies have left. It's now a prison workhouse where they teach all sorts of arts and crafts like shiv witlin and zipgun manufacture. Over half the cons are there for nonviolent drug offenses. Typical.

Wilmington has 50,000 people living in this gasoline factory and they can sit in the rocker on their porches watching the night sky glow with the



Federal Correctional Institution
Terminal Island, California

I love it that someone makes postcards of a Federal Prison


many gas burn-offs. You used to be able to see the flames from the long gone Zep Diner in the middle of town. The Zep was a classic and is sorely missed by only about 8 people, but one of them is me. The Zep was one of my inspirations to go into the restaurant business. I've always thought it would be great to have people paying you to eat in a big toy.



Other great diners of yore

Wilmington couldn't hold our interest for long so let's drop back in on the crowd at Terminal Island. By far the most famous inmate held there was Al Capone who did an 8 year stretch there for tax evasion. He paid essentially no taxes even though he was estimated to be pulling down \$100 million a year by the time he was 30.

Of course tax evasion was the least of his crimes but it was one that the Feds got to stick. He also whacked at least 35 people and was the most famous mobster America ever produced. He was the top guy in Chicago when he was 26. The man lived hard and by the time he went to prison he was pretty sick. He had a number of ailments including syphilis which ended up killing him.

TRANSFERRED TO FEDERAL CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION, Terminal Island, JANUARY 6, 1939		
Date of Birth 1/17/92		
Name <u>Alphonse Capone</u>	No. <u>85</u>	Color <u>White</u> Rec'd <u>Aug. 22, 1934</u> From <u>Atlanta</u> Age <u>35</u>
Offense <u>Violating Income Tax Laws.</u> Date of Sentence <u>Oct. 24, 1931</u> Sentence <u>10 years & \$37,617.51 F. & C.</u> Sentence began <u>May 4, 1932</u> Minimum exp. date <u>Jan. 19, 1939</u> Maximum exp. date <u>May 3, 1942</u> Parole date (Denied) <u>Sept. 3, 1935</u>	Reason For Transfer Subject is now serving sentence of 10 years for Violation of Income Tax Law. He is a notorious criminal, being a gang leader and racketeer. He has been suspected of clandestine correspondence, while confined at USP Atlanta, and of trying to have money transferred into the institution clandestinely. Transfer is recommended with Close Supervision.	
Good conduct credits <u>1800 days</u> Credits forfeited Credits restored	Former Institutional Rule Violations 10-31-33---ISOLENCE: The above named prisoner was told by me to wash the window. I assigned one window to each member of the detail; every one including subject washed their window. After they had completed their work this prisoner became very insolent and wanted a pass to the Deputy Warden saying that he did not wash windows for anyone. This man created a lot of confusion amongst the detail when he started yelling out "did you see me wash that window". This is the second time he has become insolent to me in front of the rest of the detail. Action: Reprimanded and Warned. CRIMINAL HISTORY CONTINUED FROM BELOW: 5-8-30---Arrested in Miami, Fla; Suspicion; Released 2-27-31---Sentenced at Chicago, Ill.; 6 months for contempt; appealed the case; conviction affirmed (Part of this sentence.)	
District sentenced <u>N. Ill., Chicago</u> DETAINERS <u>Commitment reads that we are to safely deliver subject to the Cook Co. Jail, with a copy of writ, where he will serve sentence with reference to misdemeanor etc; Warrant filed Sept. 28, 1936; by Sheriff's office of Cook County, Ill., (Conspiracy)</u>	Criminal History 1919---Arrested at New York City; Disorderly conduct. (Fighting) Discharged. 1923---Arrested in Chicago, Ill.; Traffic Violation; (Collision) Dismissed. 1923---(Denied) Fined \$150; Operating disorderly house; Gambling at Chicago, Ill., 9-5-23---Arrested with pistol in car; Discharged. 3-5-24---Arrested in Chicago, Ill; witness of murder; Released. 1925---Arrested in CLean, N.Y.; Disorderly; Released (Denied) 6-7-26---Indicted in Chicago; Vio. N.P.A. Dismissed. 7-15-26---Indicted in Stickney, Ill.; Vote fraud; Dismissed 7-28-26---Arrested in Chicago; Murder; Charge withdrawn 10-1-26---Indicted in Chicago; V.N.P.A. (26 others) dismissed 11-12-27---Arrested in Chicago; Refusal to testify; Dismissed 12-22-27---Fined \$2600, Joliet, Ill.; (5 other men) Con. W. Pa. 5-17-29---Received at Eastern State Penitentiary, Phila, Pa. Chg: concealed weapon; Discharged by exp. 3-17-30 1928---Arrested in Miami, Fla; Suspicion; Released. CONTINUED ABOVE.	
Partners or co-defendants <u>x</u>	Courtesy of: www.AlcatrazHistory.com	
Escape record or attempt to escape		
Medical, Neuro-Psychiatrical, Educational, Religious, Social and Employments. Medical Exam: Syphilis secondary, Physically able to do any work assigned to him; Neuro-Psych: average intelligence; He is a married man of the Catholic Religion and has 6th grade education; Admits use of liquor but denies use of drugs; Not much known of early life but it is apparent he has been connected with every known vice & racket; prior to conviction in		



Al's cell in Philly now a museum

For a time he navigated the prison system with ease like his run at Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia. As his brain started to come loose he was moved to Alcatraz and finally to Terminal Island.

Al finally got out but he was demented and broken. Oh, boo hoo.



Al at Terminal Island

SAN PEDRO

We slip around Wilmington climbing to clear the flames and fumes and on to San Pedro. But first, it's called Pee-dro not Pay-dro. Now you can talk like a local.

Sure it's a dump. But man o man we had fun back in the day. I got my first kiss in Pedro but it was my cousin's girlfriend so as a pity kiss it probably doesn't count. Nothing of note has happened in Pedro since the Japanese sunk (they did a pretty crummy job as the ship was loaded with lumber and refused to actually sink, sink) a ship right in front of the Point Fermin Lighthouse in broad daylight in WW2 and oh yes, our friend Willtom pulled one stunt too many and got recycled. More about that later.

My cousin Kent lived in a classic Italian working class neighborhood in this gritty harbor town. On hot summer days, the asphyxiating steam from the refineries mixed with the greasy redolence of the fish canneries was flavored with another even more punitive emanation—the vaporous off-gassing of a kelp rending plant. This

was a factory where they boiled seaweed to extract the iodine. Hey don't knock it. This is the perfume of my childhood. Some days the smells were so powerful it hit you in the face like a sack of ripe rats. But we were 16 and the ambience looked pretty good to us. I drove a 1952 Cadillac hearse at the time and the cousin and I took to hanging out at the A & W—drinking vast steins of root beer and eating one of America's most delectable taste treats, the deep fried burrito. Bet ya can't eat just one!

In Pedro, what isn't killer cliffs is composed of stretches of sand as horizontal as a steamrollered cat and we tooled all over them with some regularity. My car wasn't exactly running all the time so I would frequently borrow my mother's VW convertible and the cousin and I performed lovely spiraling donuts on the beach. One day my mother came home and she was uncharacteristically really mad about something. I could tell because she said, "I'm uncharacteristically really mad about something." It seems she took her convertible in for service and they told her the bottom had rusted right out of her car. "What! In California?" I asked in faux astonishment. Now this was a newish car but I could see that all that beach driving had taken a toll. I mused that they just don't make them like the used to and slithered away.

My house in the mid 60s was several miles north on a farm in Palos Verdes but I liked to hang out with a somewhat faster crowd in Pedro. One of our crew was Willtom Manetti, a sketchy



My bitchin' ride in '66

character right out of a Hopper painting. Willtom had come by his brawler's squashed nose honestly as a small time hoodlum. When I met him I was 15ish to his 18. He had dropped out of high school to smoke, drink and steal things. My cousin and I idolized him. He had a 1958 Bel Air convertible and on a couple of occasions we got to roll around town smoking Pall Malls and trying clever pickup lines on the girls.

I wish I could report that we had hobnail boots and chained black wallets sticking out of our sagging pants but all that happened a generation later. The cousin did have a pack of cigarettes rolled in his white teeshirt though. The white teeshirt was the only hood-like accoutrement in vogue at the time, oh and switchblades. We all had switchblades. We got them in TJ (Tijuana) where teenage men went to buy them along with some serious fireworks. Smuggling these toys passed for daring in those days which is comical considering what crosses the border now—machine guns and pistols flowing south with drugs and desperate humans flowing north. A note: We didn't actually carry the knives. They were hidden with the Playboys, a magazine so demure by today's standards that the foldouts can be used for eye charts in preschools now.

My precious hearse managed to throw a fatal piston (basically an automotive heart attack) and my mother suspiciously repossessed her car so we were forced to drive around in the cousin's big bread delivery truck we named Big Ben. It had room for the many girls we failed to attract though we did extract a great deal of pleasure riding around in it. It came to pass that my cousin had a PE coach whom he hated because he, the coach, was insane and made his wards perform pushups and caused them to actually run around the track like lifers in the Big House. We hated him with an incendiary fury (though I never met the man) and we terrorized the trashcans in his driveway with Big Ben at uneven intervals. This was in the day when the cans were actual cans made of metal and when we hit one full of fish heads and gallon wine bottles they folded into beautiful shapes and flew around in amusing patterns. Once two of them got stuck under the truck and after a few blocks were transformed into authentic pieces of art suitable for a Chelsea gallery.

We were happy enough crushing alley cans but it was Willtom who urged us to step it up a notch and convinced us to pry up a manhole cover and roll it down one of the very steep hills in



Pedro. This was a spectacularly bad idea. These iron wheel-bombs weighed well over a hundred pounds and being quite round they were positively begging to get rolled. Once they work up a head of steam they will exterminate everything in their path. And, like wayward oceanic driftnets, they keep up their mayhem as they gobble up clotheslines, grandmas and children alike. Luckily the murderous iron lid we sent down the hill missed the traffic and the citizens but it had an appointment with a homestead and it punched a hole in a garage wall as effortlessly as a bullet shot through a vault door made of Velveta. It left a neat cartoon cutout through the first wall but it failed to materialize from the far side (because maaaybe there was a car inside). We didn't stay to see exactly what transpired in the garage but it was going at least 45 when it hit and it would certainly have cut a Studebaker nearly in two. My cousin and I were somewhat disquieted but Willtom thought that this was the funniest thing he had ever seen. Well, the Grim Reaper got the last laugh as he generally does.

The cliffs in Pedro aren't the highest I have ever seen but because they are so accessible and represent the great outdoors to generations of drunks and stoners there is continual rain of bodies pouring over the side. Most folks get up and wobble home but every so often it is 'Aloha Charlie' or in this case 'Aloha Willtom.' My cousin and I weren't with him at the time but the report is that he and a couple of fellow criminals were at the top of the bluffs throwing beer bottles at the people on the beach when Willtom made the fatal decision to hurl a particularly large chunk of concrete at the bathers. A piece of wire in the concrete hooked his sleeve and he went along for the ride thereby depriving the Republicans of a future congressman. No one I knew missed Willtom. Here was a guy who was rumored to have pimped out his dim-bulb sister and refused to cut her in for a piece of the action. Still, it was something to hang out with a real hood so I guess we did miss him a little.

PALOS VERDES

Working class San Pedro immediately morphs into Rolling Hills and Palos Verdes. There are to my certain knowledge no gasoline factories in PV. On this peninsula all children have platinum spoons gently implanted in their little mouths at birth and are promised cars for Sweet 16, nice German ones.

Portuguese Bend, or Ooops! as the locals called it is a cove (or perhaps the more correct topological term *bight*—an area of beach defined by a concave curve of the land but does not curve back on itself) strangely devoid of houses for such a valuable venue. In fact it is the largest undeveloped tract of land on the coast for miles around. This was not always the case. When I was a kid developers built a



"I think we're gonna need more guys in orange vests."

lovely community equipped with a gate guard to keep the plebians at bay beyond the barricades.

Private enclaves on California beaches are rare because the beaches are deemed to be the property of the people and access must be provided. In the late 50s this notion had not taken hold so you could wall off a beach, build houses all over the hills and sit by your pool contemplating your roof as the values shot through it. At first the values in Oops! did go appreciate but soon tumbled, along with the homes themselves, as the earth began to subside. It was just an inch or



two in a good year so many people stayed put. But on a bad day the land could move a couple of feet. I knew one family who agreed not to park in his neighbor's pool if the neighbor agreed not to swim in their neighbor's garage.

It seems that the subdivision was built on unhappy soil and the weight of the structures was too much so the whole enchilada (along with the chips and dip) simply melted into the sea. There are still a few homes clinging to the verge of the sink but they aren't worth much because the water, power and sewer are all laid above ground giving the place a well,

Wilmingtonian look, but with less sulfur in the air. Oh, and the gate guard—he's gone.

Next to Oops! is the Frank Lloyd Wright designed Wayfarer's Chapel standing firmly (so far) on the cliff. This glad little glass masterpiece is one of the most popular wedding venues in the world. It is booked for the next 200 years so don't bother calling. Lots of famous folks have been married there like Dennis Hopper who married a ballerina about a half a century younger than himself. Oh, Dennis.

The chapel is run by the Swedenborgians. They are a tiny heaven-and-hell Christian sect with only a few thousand members. The list of famous congregants include Helen Keller, Johnny Appleseed and Maggie Gyllenhaal's father.

Jayne Mansfield got married there to the former Mr. Universe, Mickey Hargitay, before her head fell off. Poor Jayne. She somehow drove under a tractor-trailer and the entire top of the car with its contents was sheered off. This resulted in a law requiring trucks to install what came to be known as the Mansfield Bar to help prevent this.

From 1959 to 63 we lived in an old roadhouse which had been built in Palos Verdes in the Roaring 20s. When I say we, I include my mother Marilyn, my sister Jane and one or another of mother's several husbands as well as a parade of hangers on. Some private eye lived in the garage at some point. When I say roadhouse I mean speakeasy, which featured girls, gambling and perhaps a drop or two of grampa's cough syrup. This gin-joint had been planted way out of town and by Model T it was far enough to allow



*Jayne and Mickey lose their heads over each other
(Too soon?)*

plenty of time for a warning phone call to empty the place. It was in fact a tiny casino with one great room and a couple of lean-tos that we used as bedrooms. With the customary irregularity of my somewhat unsystematic upbringing this house was located smack in the middle of a garbanzo bean farm. I don't know who owned the farm but it was regularly planted and harvested. PV was by mid century part of the LA megalopolis and I guess I can say that for a few years I grew up on a farm in Los Angeles. This seems unlikely but Palos Verdes was a drowsy hamlet where nothing ever happened—until it did.

Long forgotten now, but a big deal then, was the wreck of the Dominator. The Dominator was a WW2 Liberty Ship that was part of Aristotle Onassis' vast fleet which had been converted into



And this was on a Monday

thousands and finally hundreds of thousands. Eventually over a million gawkers descended on our neighborhood. They trampled the garbanzo beans, peed in the hedges and ran the grocery out of Cheetos, Abba Zabbas and RC Cola.

The ship's crew was all right but the salvors had no luck extracting the vessel and she began to break up. The grain washed ashore where it proceeded to putrify, causing the town to smell like a garbage dump and not in a nice—maybe I'll paw through this and find cool stuff—way. Then some scuba divers decided that it would be just the thing to reconnoiter the derelict and two of them were swept under the hull and drowned. What had been a festival devolved into chaos and tragedy. There were valuable lessons here for an impressionable kid such as: Keep your eye on the radar as you approach Rocky Point, ship stuff by train, don't scuba dive where there are signs warning—*Danger, don't scuba dive here*, that sort of thing.

Soon our attention was diverted to another disaster and this one for the ages. I was staying home from school of an afternoon pretending to be ill and had just manufactured a pile of cinnamon toast. I was lounging on the couch with my cat Lester watching the movie *The Three Musketeers*. At 14 I was really into this film full of swash and buckle when they interrupted with a special announcement. It was Walter Cronkite telling me that "President Kennedy has been shot." I can still hear the words clearly in my head half a century later. The previous generation had the

a grain freighter. On a dark and stormy night the ship strayed off course and was caught fast on Rocky Point. Finally something happened! Within hours, hundreds of people packed the cliff tops to getaload of the tugs struggling to wrench the ship loose. Schools canceled classes, people ditched work. Soon thousands came, tens of

bombing of Pearl Harbor as their shocker and today we have the Twin Towers deeply engraved on our souls but in 1963 the showstopper was the assassination of President Kennedy. If you didn't live through this era you can't imagine what it was like.

John Kennedy had the substantial wind at his back with the Soviet threat and this had the effect of making most folks pull together when he yelled, "Stroke!" Well not everyone. Someone shot him and today it is still the question of—who? Oswald was definitely in on it but it seems pretty obvious that because Oswald was rubbed out by a patriotic mobster that there were other interests in play. So who else had a hand in this? There are many theories and because, like so many, I was and am still troubled by the events. I can tell you what some of the insiders think.

I was warmly acquainted with Woodside's Paul Fay Jr. for many years. He was known as Red to his friends, and he had plenty of them. Red was an old man when I knew him but in his salad days he heaped up a lot of living. Red wrote a couple of books—one was titled, *The Pleasure of His Company* and it tells the story of Red's great friendship with John Kennedy. Red was with the future president during the PT109 days in WW2 and later became his campaign chairman when Kennedy ran for Senate. Kennedy appointed Red the undersecretary of the navy under McNamara who was apparently a bit bent out of shape by having Red forced down his gullet. McNamara must have thought, "Who does he think he is, *The President?*... oh yeah."

In the book Red tells about he and Kennedy tooling around California in a 1948 Plymouth convertible and getting kicked out of a country club in Monterey for unruly behavior. The back-story is that Kennedy was sent out west to diminish the noise emanating from an uncomfortable situation concerning a girl so he came to California and audited some classes at Stanford before going into the navy. He stayed with Red in Woodside when he was out west. Red was circumspect in the book but in person he told me a couple of things that I dare not put in print because it reads like salacious gossip and even if Red is not in a position to care anymore there is too much talk about the private lives of presidents.

Now Red was in a position to have a studied opinion about who shot the President. One night over dinner I asked him the question I had saved for the occasion. "Who shot JFK, Red?" He looked at me with mournful eyes for a long moment and I could see him tearing up as he shook his head slowly from side to side. "I don't know. I just don't know."

"Awwwww, damn it Red! Make up a story." But no, he seemed really not to have come to a conclusion and that is how it still is with many of us who lived through it.

The Watergate hearings were no help. I was actually at the hearings in the early 70s. I had been listening to the



The last few seconds of Camelot

broadcast on NPR as I circled the Beltway around DC and thought, "Oh by golly, this is live. I think I'll drop in and see history unfurl right at me feet." I pulled up to the Old Senate Office Building and found parking right in front. I ran up the steps a pair at a time and into the hearing room. There was no security of any kind. Ahhh those were fine days. Maybe we had no laptops or cell phones but you could fly on an airplane barefoot, with a gun in your pocket while smoking a cigarette. No gate security was a definite plus but you could get life in prison for pot in Texas at the time so it wasn't all kittens and candy.



Oh Uncle Edgar, I can't marry you.

crime buster. His counterpart in the Soviet Union made him look like your sweet Aunt Millie, though. Lavrenty Beria was the head of the secret police in the U.S.S.R. Lav's workday consisted of sending millions to their deaths in the Siberian gulags and his hobby was raping women, stabbing them up a bit and 6-footing them in his wife's rose garden. Makes an underwear fetish seem sort of sweet, yes?

The jury of history says there are several suspects so pick one or feel free to mix and match. There's Oswald, of course, and the Dallas Police Department, rogue FBI agents, the Mob, the Cubans and the Russians. But wait there's one more. I know a woman who is the daughter of the man who was an assistant director of the FBI. She would not like me to be more specific but let me say that her father reported to the shifty J. Edgar Hoover and was a principle investigator on the assassination. She says that J. Edgar used to call their home at all hours and that her father was nearly driven ke-rasy by this odious G-man.

Anyway my friend said she knows with great certainty that it was Johnson's wife Lady Bird who ordered the hit. My friend is convinced that Johnson was a puppet being run by his powerful wife and when Lyndon was passed over for the top job she vowed vengeance. My friend says that The Bird was a known killer. And I always thought this kindly old lady just beautified the highways.

Today we can see that J. Edgar was troubled man and entirely inappropriate as our number one

J. Edgar wielded power unimaginable today. They used to joke that when he died no one wanted to remove him from his chair and that he ran things as a corpse for a few more years. It is known that he was no friend of Kennedy's and it has also been reported that he wore women's underwear and had a long time live-in pal/lover. Now there is nothing wrong with wearing women's underwear...if you are a woman or if you are just some guy who likes to. But J. Edgar was a fagbuster (his term) and he went hammer and tongs after one Johnson aide accused of a certain indiscretion. Everyone recalls that Nixon taped conversations but it was actually Kennedy who installed the tape system and Johnson made good use of it too. You can find some funny/sad bits online. The most amazing one is J. Edgar calling Johnson and Johnson asking Hoover how you spot a homosexual. J. Edgar drones in his voice which is a cross between Betty Boop and a teeny buzz saw. "Well, Mr. President, you can spot a home-sexual by their funny way of talking and they generally have funny names." You can practically hear Johnson laughing as he draws out this tragic, evil little man.

What has all this to do with the coast of California you ask? Oh hell, I don't know—let's keep sailing north...

Immediately overlooking the Dominator crash site was Palos Verdes High School where I shared space with two of the dumbest kids I ever met, Daulton Lee and Chris Boyce. I think I had a history class with Daulton but I can't recall exactly because he was not particularly memorable at the time. On the evening news a neighbor whiffled—"he seemed like such a nice young man." In fact, a colossal dimwit.

These two are remembered as The Falcon and The Snowman. Chris was into falconry and I saw him flying his bird once—hence the Falcon. Daulton became a coke dealer so he was the Snowman. After high school Chris got a job at the avionics firm TRW and somehow had access to top secret missile designs. Daulton thought it would be nifty to have his friend steal the documents and sell them to the Russians. They managed to make contact and were selling military secrets to the commies for a few months. Chris used his money to buy more drugs and finally decided to bypass his pal and go directly to the Russians and, in one of the most moronic moves ever, he threw a note wrapped around a rock over the wall of the Soviet embassy in Mexico City saying essentially, "You wanna buy some classified documents?" Immediately after he threw the note he was caught with documents in his pocket marked TOP SECRET. The junior spies were given very, very long sentences.

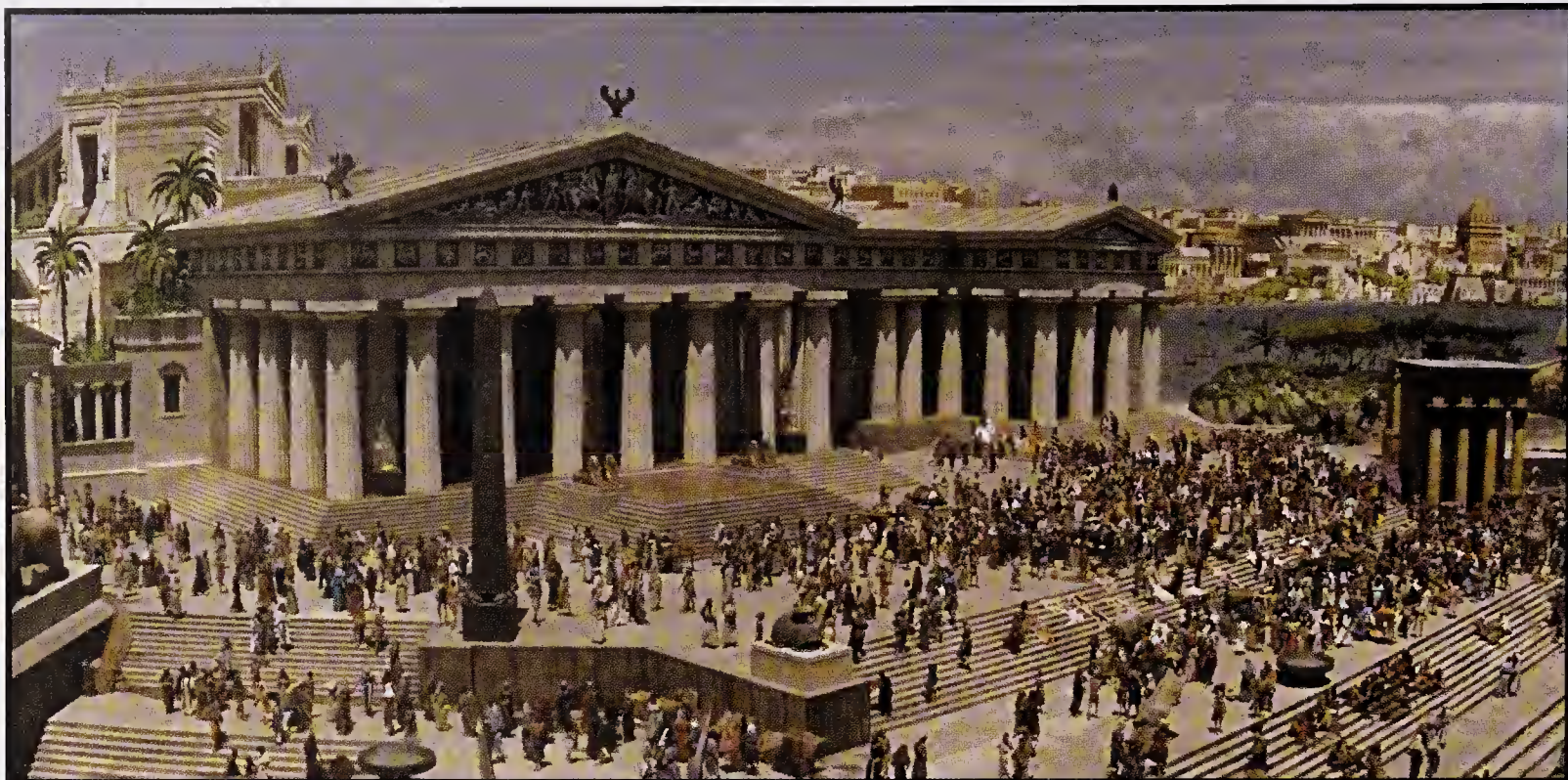
Our simple life on the hills above the tranquil sea seemed punctuated with one disaster after another, none grander than the 1963 epic fiasco, *Cleopatra*. Have you seen this sword and sandal epic recently? Ever? Don't miss it or at least see some of it. This screen gem is an example of what can go wrong when things, well, go wrong. Like so many filmmakers before and since a



At least the casting was good



Burton, Taylor with asp hat and a confused Rex Harrison



Alexandria, Egypt, pre computer graphics

bunch of insiders gathered round the ol martini bar and through cigar clenched jaws said to each other, "It's gonna be a humongous hit and we'll all be swimmming in fat stacks of Franklins." The budget was two million but after 5 million had been spent and not one usable foot of film made it into the can they canned the director and hired the best, Joseph Mankiewicz. Joe had a string of hits: *Philadelphia Story*, *The Quiet American*, *Guys and Dolls* and 9, count em, *nine*, Academy Awards. Well a guy with two dozen wouldn't have helped this bomb. The project was doomed from the very beginning.

As time dragged on the producers lost two of their three leads and then the third, Elizabeth Taylor, got sick and had to have an emergency tracheotomy on the set. You can actually see the scar on her throat in some of the shots. Then the cold weather killed the desert foliage that had been brought to the studio in England and the rain melted the sets.

Elizabeth Taylor was in contract for a record setting one million dollars. This amount eventually swelled to \$7 million due to the delays in production. During filming, Liz met Richard Burton and the two began a public/private-love/hate affair as the world looked on in wonder. Because they were both married to other people their relationship resulted in caustic moral outrage and this brought bad publicity to an already troubled enterprise. Can you picture such an affair having a negative effect on a movie today? Co-star bamage is practically a contract stipulation now.

By the time the Cleopatra production team rolled into our town the movie was already notorious and they were still shooting it. Coming home from school one day I saw my sister tearing out of the house screaming some gibber from which I extracted the words *Richard* and *Liz* so we jumped on our bikes and peddled hell for leather to the cliffs where we found hundreds of people shooting a big scene with Richard Burton and Rex Harrison. They were the Pitt and Clooney of 1960s and there they were just down the street. "Hey, you guys, no scuba diving on the wreck now."

45 years after this film was made I watched it in its three and a third hour entirety for the first time and I was amazed. The film is pretty good in parts and very good in the big scenes. Liz had countless costumes glued to her somewhat husky frame, each more ghastly then the last and there is so much skin in this flick that I had to cover my dog's eyes. Some in the press referred to the film as *Nipples on the Nile*.

In those days there was no freeze frame like today and during one bath scene you can see about ½ second of authentic nipple. Adding even more *vava* to go with the plenteous *voom* there is an undeniable crotch shot in another bath scene (she spent no little time in the bath) causing countless prints to be fried at that exact point as the projectionists tried to get a better look. Some folks probably wish all the frames had been incinerated.

The script hews fairly closely to the historical record and there's no denying that the colossal sets are magnificent. I really enjoyed the recent BBC/HBO series *Rome*. It looked lavish enough but compared to *Cleopatra* it felt like an 8mm home movie shot through a tan sock. The acting in *Cleopatra* is bizarre and they never finished a shooting script so they improvised much of the dialogue as they shot. Imagine James Cameron showing up on the set of *Avatar* with an outline. Rex Harrison as the seducer of Liz Taylor is a bit hard to fetch and Richard Burton can act up a storm but in a dress, with his knobby knees akimbo, he looks like he's gadding about in a prep school play.

The first cut came in at nearly 5 hours so the theaters refused to exhibit it because they could only manage one showing a night. The studio hacked an hour out of it so the finished film is too short to make sense but way too long to sit through even for a 14 year old looking for lady parts. It was the last film to have an intermission—probably because so many people didn't come back for the second half.

Jane and I were pretty far from the action but at the conclusion of the shoot I saw them turn off the gas-powered campfire and pack the logs in a box. Wow! Tricky. It turns out the film had a lot of tricks like this and eventually they had a bit of a cost overrun. The budget went 2,200% over—to around \$47 million, or \$300,000,000.00 in today's dollars making it the third most expensive film of all time. *Pirates of the Caribbean* cost slightly more, but it was a hit.

What a fiasco. Oh, like I've never made a mistake.

The granddaddy of overspend is a film you've never seen.

Nothing can compare to the cost of the 1963 Soviet film, *War and Peace*. This was a government project and like many government films has a certain charm. Originally exhibited at a staggering 9 hours long (roughly how long it took to stand in line for a roll of toilet paper in Moscow at the time) it includes the burning of Sebastopol. They built a more or less full sized copy of Sebastopol in Spain and burned it down (they didn't want to torch the actual city, though in the end that would have been cheaper). One battle scene is 45 minutes long with 120,000 extras. So many horses were killed that the SPCA set up pickets at movie theaters in the U.S. (What do they think the extras ate?). By all accounts the film is unwatchable and in a rare display of critical unity the movie review site Rotten Tomatoes gave it a perfect 0% rating.

When the smoke cleared the Soviets had burned through 700 million in today's dollars and this the hard earned taxes of Russian factory conscripts and potato ranchers. The actual Crimean War didn't cost that much. I once saw a VCR copy (a half dozen cassettes) at a video store that came in a tattered shopping bag that was for rent for a dollar. Ouch!

Zeppelin travel is such a great way to see the world that we lamented there wasn't more dirigible travel possible. There are only a few dozen blimps in the world and at the time of our trip just two Zeppelins flying.



"No really, this time it'll work."

Not to be outdone the Army built one as well; this one was 300 feet long costing \$301 million. They sold it back to the builder for \$301,000 or 1/100th of the original price. It does take \$400,000 worth of helium to fill it and about 30 people to operate (and a real big hanger) but either ship would make a real fine sky yacht.

Just before we left the Palos Verdes Peninsula we flew over Malaga Cove with the hilarious fountain that has been in the public square since the 1930s. It is a copy of a fountain in Bologna, Italy and the replica was donated to the town. The town fathers hadn't paid close attention to a few of the subtleties when they approved it. When it arrived and the fountain was erected it wasn't the only thing that was erected. There are four mermaids holding their breasts as streams of water gush forth in the cardinal directions. Neptune surmounts this extravaganza and he arrived with his manhood intact and on full display. The locals hastily crafted a fig leaf to cover his working parts.

After 2,500 hundred years of naked statues Rome itself caved to the modern hesitancy to let the sunshine in. In 1930 Benito Mussolini built a stadium featuring 150 twice life-sized white marble statues of athletes—au natural. Then the 1960 Olympics rolled into town, and with a power stronger than ancient Roman tradition, they fig-leaved every hill and dale—well the dales anyway. The whole effect is pretty whimsical especially when you see a naked skier, with skies, wearing only a bronze leaf. Sooo cooold!

I went to Malaga Cove Elementary School for a time. I was never one to linger at a school but I did attend long enough to be a student in my mother's classroom. This I do not recommend. Very stressful. It was an art class and I was, by my estimation, a competent artist. So she had a real dilemma. Grades back then counted. I don't know

Somewhere two other rather nice airships are lurking deflated and packed in shipping containers. Together they cost less than *War and Peace* but not by much. In 2010 the U.S. Air Force 'urgently needed' a 370 foot blimp for surveillance in Afghanistan. They plowed \$211 million into the ship which was 95% finished when the program was axed. It flew only once two feet off the ground before it was mothballed.



Well at least he stopped peeing in the middle of town

what kids do for grades today but there was no 4.4 GPA possible as is the case now. Back then kids got A through F. Where the hell is E? Well F signified **failure** and there is just no room for that pesky E that might be mistaken for **Effort** so there were Fs and F minuses. To get an F- one had to actually burn down a classroom with the teacher trapped inside pounding furiously on the windows but this rarely happened.

My mother didn't want to be accused of favoritism so come grade time she was in a real fix. I had done a big project on Medieval siege engines and had forged an elaborate display of weapons made out of aluminum foil and painted sticks. These were not just axes and swords. No, there were several working catapults. I had mounted these miniatures on a big chunk of plywood with a lawn of green velvet. It looked like a 14th century military arms trade show. First, all the kids said that my father must have built it. Oh sure, Mad Walter looked up from his Camel-smoke daze and just whipped out these careful models. Then they suggested I bought it. I'm not sure where they thought this sort of thing was sold. So the grade thing was tricky. Or so I thought. No, my mother gave me an A and took the heat, which as I recall was real enough. Good going Mom. Sorry for rusting out your car.

Now we enter the Los Angeles airspace and wave a small American flag out the window just in case they shoot at us. They wouldn't do that would they? Yeah well, it happens.



Rowan lets the shore batteries know we're coming

THE BATTLE OF LOS ANGELES

California has always had war battles but never on the scale of Sebastapol though we try, we try. The mass shootings we see all over this country today have their roots in our time tested predilection to shoot first and blame the victim.

Sometimes the enemy was badly out gunned, as was the case on the night of February 24th, 1940. Japanese enemy planes were seen just after sunset over the coastal cities west of Los Angeles. There were reports that 25 were in a V formation at 12,000 feet. They were fired on by the vigilant shore batteries and one Japanese bomber crashed at 185th and Vermont. There were also reports of a huge mysterious aircraft that seemed impervious to our firepower.

Over 1,400 13 pound exploding shells were fired. Although no critical installations were damaged, several homes burned and 5 people on the ground died during the battle. This is doubly tragic because there were in fact no planes foreign or domestic in the air that night to absorb the battering. The day before there had been a Japanese submarine attack north of Santa Barbara but there was no bombing raid on LA. Some jittery artillery team set the fusillade in motion by accident and what with the searchlights and bombs bursting in air it sure seemed like an attack. Oh, and the downed plane at 185th. There is no 185th Street. The Battle of Los Angeles was, like so many in California, a lot of shooting with almost no one killed. Now that's my kind of war!

Although it hasn't resulted in a shooting war there has been an ongoing battle to split the state. One year the North tries to cut the South loose; the next year the South want to go it alone. One proposal drew a line north of Sonoma making San Francisco part of Southern California. In 1850 Angelinos petitioned Congress to declare the lands south of Monterey—Central California. Nothing came of it but another group rose up with the same idea shortly thereafter and this has happened on a regular basis since. In fact there have been 27 serious attempts to split the state. Article V of the U.S. Constitution actually allows this so it isn't impossible. And the splitting isn't just in twain. Tim Draper, a prominent Silicon Valley venture capitalist, has been working to cut the place up into 6 new states. So who gets the iconic gold, animals, minerals and fish?



REDONDO BEACH

This is the town where surfing came to the mainland from Hawaii. In 1907, Henry Huntington owned most of the beach in Redondo and was eager to peddle lots to visiting Angelenos looking for a break from the heat of the greater Los Angeles Basin. Huntington had seen Hawaiian beach boys surfing and decided to hire one of them, a young Hawaiian-English athlete named George Freeth, to demonstrate the art of surfing for the crowd.

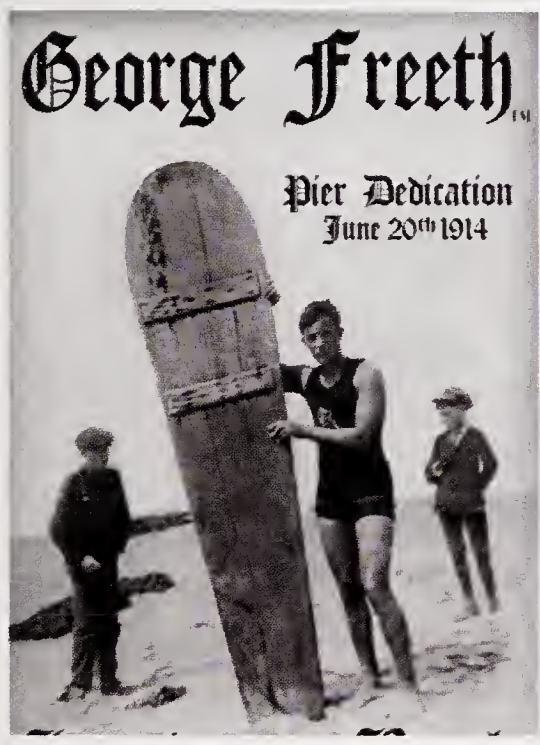
George came with a 16 foot solid wood board but soon cut some of it off and the 10 footer was born. George exhibited his surfing prowess for Redondo Beach visitors in front of the Hotel Redondo and was known as *the man who could walk on water*. He was eventually made the official Redondo Beach lifeguard, the first lifeguard in California. George spread a surfing revolution that would eventually become a phenomenon on the California Coast.

Redondo is also where I saw the movie *Psycho*. It was considered the scariest film made to date and one hook was that they wouldn't seat you after it started. This got outsized publicity and people came up with all sorts of inaccurate speculations for this policy. The real reason

was the star gets whacked in the first reel and if people didn't see this they would miss the whole point of the movie. There were scenes that Hitchcock promised to cut to make the censors happy after they first saw it. He cannily resubmitted without any cuts and they were happy with the nonexistent edits. One part they really didn't like was a shot of a flushing toilet. It depicted a torn up note going down the drain but it made them blush because, because, ...*well I do de-clare!* (said with a Southern drawl as you sink onto the divan fanning yourself).

The town fathers built a pretty terrific pier complex from which I used to fish as a kid. Boys were all over the piers in the 50s catching inedible small fish like the perch which is 115% needle sharp bones. There is also a harbor, King Harbor where my family had a sailboat. I used to fish from this as well and I could haul a great many much larger fish, primarily bonito. This fish has fewer bones but tastes like an oil soaked alley cat. Only the very poor or the very rich (at sushi restaurants) eat this fish.

Right next to this is a sight everyone got used to over the last 60 years but by today's standards is one heck of a eye gouging power plant. Today a few folks, errr everybody, would insist this be located in someone else's back yard. "Isn't this what we have Wilmington for, fercrissake!"



George with the ol coffin lid



HERMOSA BEACH

I was 11 when my family lived with me on a sidewalk in Hermosa Beach. I don't mean we slept on a piece of cardboard on the concrete but rather we had this old house on what's called a walk-street. Many of the houses front on a sidewalk facing the opposite homes and all the cars are in an alley in back. This is a terrific idea.

In 1960 Hermosa was composed of sand, concrete and beatniks. In fact back in the early 60s there were only about 3 places to find beatniks. New York, San Francisco and Hermosa Beach. I used to hang out at the door of the Insomniac and watch the cool cats in their black turtle-necks sip coffee out of hysterically tiny cups and mumble mysterious blather to the 4 or 5 people slumped over tables looking to me more exhausted than cool.

The Beats were funny but unfathomable and I was much more interested in trekking the alleys (even today this town is half alley) where our cast-offy culture abandons great treasure. As a kid I had regular routes and became expert at unearthing these detrital truffles. Once I found an electrically rotating Timex watch display which was bigger than I was. I figured that one day I might have a glittering Timex collection and this would be just the thing in which to flaunt it.

Another time Jane and I came across an entire case of what I remember was labeled as *spits*. These seemed to be pairs socks without ends you sort of button up but we could not fathom how to wear them. I imagined they were some sort of undergarment so I was a bit skittish about polling the adults as to their exact function. Years later I realized that they were *spats*; the 19th century shoe coverings made famous by Scrooge McDuck.

Then there was my paydirt strike of solid gold—or the next best thing anyway. Much like the excavation of Tutankhamen's tomb I opened an unremarkable looking cardboard box to find some pretty exciting pornography or what passed for it over a half century ago. Today you can see this on CBS but then it was pretty fast stuff and went for good money at school where I sold it page by page until I got caught. Clearing a healthy profit put me on a path to the entrepreneurialism I still practice though I'm not (lamentably) a pornographer.

Because I was pretty freshly minted, being a kid, some of my acquisitions didn't exactly pan out. Next to Runyon's Grocery Store, where Jane and I fortified ourselves with the tasty candy of that era—



Rod Taylor rocking spats

*The only time clarinet players had girlfriends was from 1956 to 1958.

Jujubes, Paper Candy Dots and Chuckles—was a garage where a mechanic named Leo Love tinkered with jalopies. There were tailings of broken car parts radiating all round Mr. Love and these were ambergris to a kid. I would marvel at these bits of machinery as I assessed the yard. I thought, “Hey just look at this stuff. These parts cost real money and *the* technology!” One day I came by and Leo had a cumbrous engine block from a prewar Hudson or Hupmobile burdening a couple of muscular crates. He said it had been rebuilt and it was in great shape even if the rest of the car had somehow gotten away. And he was thinking of getting rid of it. Now I considered myself a shrewd negotiator (though I generally got everything for free) but it was hard to contain my imagination over the potential this machine offered.

“Sooooo Leo...are you going to throw it away?” I asked slyly.

“Naw, I’ll sell it.” he said. “It’s nearly complete. All you do is just drop it right back in and you’d have practically a new car. This engine is worth at least \$300 but I’d let it go for... hummmm—20 bucks.” Now I was no slouch when it came to math. If I owned this engine—this veritable powerhouse of possibilities—and could find the car (which would take the 4 years or so until I was 16) I would have the deal-of-the-century. I sized up this Leo character and decide to go for broke. With a great deal more conviction than I felt I said, “If you’d go 15 I’ll buy it.”

Leo squinted at me then lowered his gaze, inspecting his squalid fingernails. He slowly swiveled toward the engine block and lifted his eyes skyward for a long time. He then turned to me and answered gravely, “OK, kid.”

OK kid! OK kid! Was this man a complete fool? Was his brain made of weeds? Here was a \$300 dollar engine and I had for all intents and definitely on purpose—stolen it.

Before the ink was dry on our verbal contract I suddenly realized that I didn’t exactly have the money. I had maybe—70 cents. I quickly arranged for some time with Leo and shot home, my heels smoking. I considered hitting my mother up for the cash but she was a child of The Depression and generally floundered when assaying the value of engines in the modern economy.

My sister would be a far better confederate. She and I were actually pretty good at raising money. One of our jobs was to scour the beach for soda pop bottles. Back in ancient times bottles were actually reused. Today the bottles are plastic and everyone from Holmby Hills householders to the homeless gather them to be melted down and turned into god knows what, but back then recycling didn’t exist. The bottles were reused. Can you imagine? There were classic stories of mice and wedding rings found in the reused bottles. Most of the bottles were small and by small I mean Coke came in 6.5 oz bottles which redeemed for 3 cents. Today you have bigger bottles in your daughter’s Barbie’s Dreamhouse. Later the bottles swelled to 12 ozs for the professional athlete, truck driver and glutton crowd. Then there were the rare quarts which were worth a nickel and were hauled to the beach by gigantic Italian families. Amass a dozen of these and you were set for life. After a long day roaming the beach we could come up with as much as 3 dollars.

A lot of the bottles were found in the garbage cans but most were picked up right in the sand. Back then everyone seemed to be littering. It was nothing to have a vast picnic at the beach and just snap the towel free from the trash and leave it. There was lots of broken glass and only incidental health care. If, as often happened, you came home with a cut foot you got yelled at for being careless. You were on your own.

Of course there were other perils of this trade. At the end of one long Sunday a gang of hooligans confronted us in the alley as we approached Runyon’s. They demanded our bottles with a “We doon need no stinkin baches,” attitude. This represented the entire day’s take and we were

not going to surrender our hoard without a fight. Jane—to her everlasting credit—led the charge against what I recall was two or three hundred of these raiders and lobbed a quart in their direction. Soon we were blasting them with smashing bottles. They ran and after seeing the minefield we had created, so did we. Pyrrhic sure, but sooo sweet.

Burglary also paid well. I knew it was dishonest but hey, my teenage years as a hot-rodder were at stake. On Sunday we would comb the neighborhood for unretrieved Sunday LA Times. These had been left in front of homes by people too bone idle to snatch them up in a timely manner. It was my theory that if not *in by 9—it is mine*. Carefully unrolled and displayed on a cardboard box you could sell them for a quarter downtown in front of the grocery store. Plus Mad Wal-

ly bought one from me every weekend. Looking back I wondered why we didn't just jack them from the dispenser racks and then I remembered they didn't exist then. Recently the newspapers have gotten so expensive that I'm thinking of reopening this operation.

Right next to Runyon's was a business that thrills me to this day. It was called Gunz N' Donuts. They were good for their sign and we did drop some serious coin on donuts but they wouldn't sell us any guns. I'm not sure which is more dangerous. Sadly, this concept never caught on in California but I'm sure they do this in Arizona.

I checked in with Leo every few days and assured him I was harvesting the requisite cash from the landscape and he and I would soon be concluding our business. Finally after several weeks of work and after my sister's cut (and buying a great many donuts) I had the 15 dollars. I took a wagon and rolled on over to Leo's for the big day. I was pretty happy as I earnestly counted out the 15 singles but tried not to let it show to this guy who I had so badly taken in this deal. Leo counted the money all over again and after carefully folding the bills and inserting them in his jeans pocket he shook my hand and said that she was all mine.

This engine block must have weighed about a bazillion lbs and it became immediately apparent that it would have crushed a Radio Flyer. I wasn't sure what to do so I asked Leo if I could just keep it at his place until I worked out a suitable mode of transport. And there it stayed and is possibly there still, waiting for some dumb kid to come back and retrieve it.



This isn't me but I did have this job

MANHATTAN BEACH

Manhattan Beach was built on sand. The dunes were 70 feet tall in places. Were. This was way too much sand, according to some local businessmen. So in the 1920s the Kuhn Brothers Construction Co. sold over half the town's sand to the City of Honolulu to pave Waikiki Beach with Manhattan Beach sand. The sand was loaded into the Santa Fe Railroad cars and transported to the harbor in San Pedro and then on ships and barges and shipped to Hawaii over a 10 year period. Imagine selling a beach right out in front of everybody?

They wouldn't do that today. In 2013 more homes exceeding \$1 million were sold in Manhattan Beach than any other city in California. Hillsborough was second. I'll bet they're sorry now that they wholesaled all that sand.

In 2011 a CNN poll declared Manhattan Beach to be the best place in the U.S. to be rich and single. They had other number ones as well. Back in the 1990s the town had the reputation of the highest per capita alcohol consumption but since then Reno has crushed this record.



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"Thanks for all the sand, suckahs!"



VENICE

Venice used to be great and it is pretty cool now but when Jim Morrison and I lived there it was a rodent flavored garbage dump featuring truck tires, headless plastic dolls and condoms floating in the canals with exhausted neighborhoods too played out to support drug dealers. That was 50 years ago and now it's LA beach-chic but there is little to differentiate it from the other

beach communities except perhaps for the high concentration of good looking roller skaters who shimmy along the strand when the weather is good which is generally er, always.

A hundred years ago the beaches from San Diego to Malibu were simply mad for amusement parks which sprouted from the piers with their haunted houses,



restaurants, aquariums, freak shows, games of chance and Ferris wheels. It seemed that every town with a pier and a pool laid claim to have the biggest of whatever it featured. Venice was right in the midst of this and outdid its neighbors because in this case they came by their hyperbole legitimately. It was the Disneyland of its day. Venice had 6 miles of canals with gondolas that had come along with their gondoliers from the real Venice. The town's developers built 3 piers including one 1,200 footer along with a 2,800 seat





auditorium, a ship-shaped restaurant and a gargantuan dance hall. There was a heated salt-water plunge and a vibrant business street arcaded with Venetian architecture. A half-sized steam train chugged around the town to take revelers to their rented cottages or tent villages.

There were 6 other piers within a few miles of Venice but none as grand as this complex with its 3 massive roller coasters. There were a great many other spectacular rides like the Dragon Slide down which you were hurled in a spiral bamboo chute with only a gunnysack between you and a life-altering splinter. There were beauty contests of all sorts even for 4 year old girls, animal acts including ostrich races and magicians, all for the hundreds of thousands of visitors that came in the summer to Venice to frolic, cavort and gambol about.

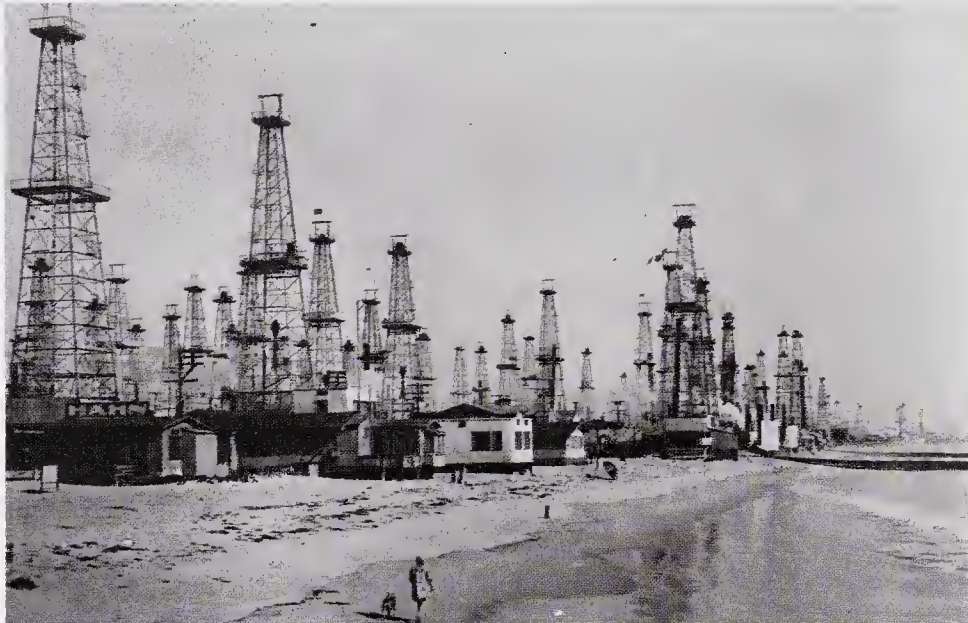


Ever the showman the Plunge manager and movie stuntman, Jake Cox, liked to manifest his penchant for the prepostentational by donning what he called his chick-en-suit, soaking it in kerosene and, using a stage pistol's flash, light himself on fire as he hurled himself off the high dive into the pool. Always willing to up his game Jake decided to leap from an airplane, in flames, into the ocean. This was a fellow truly dedicated to his craft. People cheered mightily but they never did recover his body. Jack's ability to calculate all the risks was deficient but the pilot wasn't going to join Mensa anytime soon either.

The world's fairs in Chicago, San Diego and San Francisco demonstrated John and Jane Q. Public's lust for colossal waterside amusements and it was these fairs that helped spur the success of the copy cat playgrounds which popped up at the beaches wherever there was enough sand left and a trolley system to get people there.

"Don't worry mama. I've done this a million times."

By the Depression many of these parks began to decline until they looked much like old ladies on bus benches with their teeth floating loose and their stockings rolled down their calves. In a sad turn of events the founders of the amusement park at Venice petitioned to be annexed by the City of Los Angeles. Later the LA City Council determined that these piers were an unsightly



blight and refused to renew the lease—so the grand piers in Venice were closed. These parks were a big deal for people before AC and TV. Back then people used to go outside to cool off. Imagine going outside in LA in the summer. Ha!

We lament the degradation of our environment today and we can all feel the city fathers' pain at the unwashed masses being viewed as urban decay. Those damn poor—they're everywhere! The City of Los Angeles forced the closure of the amusement park at Venice because it drew the wrong element and cluttered the environment. But just a few years later

This looks muuuch better than a buncha beach bums

oil was discovered in Venice and the LA city fathers recalibrated their views on what constituted urban blight when they permitted 450 oil wells which popped up instantly on the beach.

As the amusement parks were shuttered they became far more interesting to the local kids than when they had been open. We used to break into the boarded up aquarium in Hermosa Beach. I had gone there when it was operating but there was something about the illegal entry that made it a magical place absolutely designed for adventuresome boys. The fish were long gone from their unconvincingly decorated tanks but there was plenty to salvage. We found all sorts of things that we thought we could peddle but were dismayed to discover that ancient fire extinguishers were hard to fence.

Once I got caught when I was about 12 inside the aquarium by the cops who made *such* a big deal out of it. I had to go to the police station with my mother where the desk sargent attempted to terrorize me with the threat of hard time. The sweaty gendarme even put me in jail for a few minutes to 'give me taste.' In the cell I saw where some talented artist had depicted anatomically exaggerated pencil sketches on the wall of such shocking filth and weirdness that the pictures haunt me to this day. Damn—jail was even better than the aquarium!

Back in the day the sweltering hordes would pile aboard the Red Line to go out to the beach. Keep in mind that Los Angeles and the main centers of population were dozens of miles inland and this tram system was cheap and reliable. Standard Oil, GM and Firestone thought that folks should ride the less efficient but vastly more profitable buses and cars so they conspired to exterminate these electric streetcars. When the conspirators were dragged into court and found guilty they were fined a total of \$7.00 and told to stop what they were doing but by then the rails were gone. They split the fine 3 ways no doubt. Now the estimated cost in LA to rebuild this long gone transportation system is \$150 billion and this is probably low. Heck, I'll take the Zeppelin.

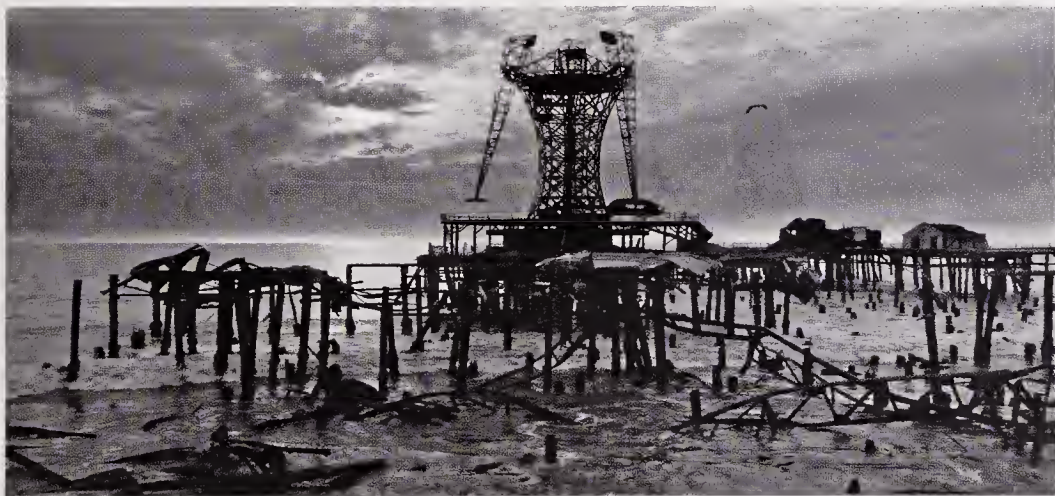
Venice was also a favorite of Hollywood's stars. Many bought homes and summer cottages to enjoy the beach life. In the 20s Charlie Chaplin rented a penthouse apartment at the Waldorf Hotel on Ocean Front Walk. Nightlife at cabarets like the Ship Cafe and King George Hotel's roof garden attracted all sorts of screen celebrities. Private parties, like the one given by Carole Lombard at the Venice Pier's Fun House were attended by stars like Cary Grant, Myrna Loy and Donald O'Connor. Big names back then.



Enda the Line

After World War 2, when Venice lost its amusement piers and acquired a seedy, run down look, movie producers took advantage of the locale. In 1958 Orson Wells converted downtown Venice into a Mexican border town and installed a border crossing on Ocean Front Walk for *Touch of Evil*. For this movie the makeup people tried to remodel Charlton Heston into a Mexican with unconvincing results. Later Roger Corman used Venice as a location for several of his cheesy-wonderful horror flicks.

Instead of fixing up the place, the City of Los Angeles bulldozed more than 500 historic buildings in the 50s and 60s, giving the zone even more of a bombed-out appearance. Immigrants and artists moved into what was left and Venice's modern chapter began. The Beat poets arrived. Charles Bukowski worked at the Venice Post Office. Gangs appeared (the infamous Crips street gang was born not far away) and Venice became dangerous. But gradually through the 70s and 80s the artistic and cultural success of some of the creatives brought renewed interest in Venice. Today the canals have been restored and the houses cost some serious pesos.



Venice Beach 1971

The beach denizens on The Strand haven't changed that much in the last 30 years. A tan muscleman in a pink thong plays an electric guitar cruising by on Rollerblades. There's a guy who hammers nails up his nose and jitterbugs on broken glass and a woman wearing homemade clothes made of tin foil sells expired wall calendars and barks about aliens. You know, a day at the beach.

MUSCLE BEACH

We sailed over Muscle Beach but couldn't really make it out. Well, dern! Muscle Beach was the best. Originally *The Beach* was just south of the Santa Monica Pier but by 1959 it became such a monster that it was shoved down the coast to the less developed land in Venice. Established in the 1930s as a place to grease up and lift weights Muscle Beach became such a phenomenon that by 1955 it drew crowds of 10,000 on a big day. It can be argued that the physical culture movement in America sprang from this tiny stretch of sand. Vic Tanny, Joe Gold and Jack LaLanne could be seen pumping and primping but the greatest of them all was Steve Reeves.

Most of the power lifters were the size of gymnasts but Steve was considered a giant at 6'-1". Although compared to Dolph Lundgren (at slightly over 17 feet tall) I guess it isn't that impressive now. Most folks today haven't even heard of Steve but he actually had one of the most successful movie careers around. He made dozens of movies and in 1959 was the most highly paid actor in Europe. You see that's it. Who cares about Europe? Its like saying, "She's pretty enough, except in the face." But Steve was a glistening sword-and-sandal guy specializing in playing colossal gladiators and other rippling he-men wearing a simple loincloth and half a pound of baby oil. It was Steve who convinced Sylvester Stallone to go into the movies telling him that it wasn't about the acting (and in Stallone's case it certainly wasn't about looks).

Steve's first movie was the 1955 Ed Wood classic *Jail Bait* in



which he had a small part as a detective. But then bursting suddenly out of his shirt and onto the screen he hit his stride playing Hercules. His were Italian movies pre-dating the spaghetti westerns. Italy was fertile ground for this bulging talent principally for the fact that Italian

movies at the time were filmed without sound. Really, no sound at all. They recorded it in post production. This is due to the fact that after the War (hey kids, this always means WW2) Italian Neorealist Cinema was made on the cheap and this made it easy for the Italians to release their films in several languages at once. There was no attempt to sync the lips and the results are at once erratic and charming. Sort of like Muscle Beach.



"Do these elevator sandals make me look fat?"



Men, women and children

than that. They didn't just lift weights but also performed elaborate gymnastics and concocted human towers so the performances had a carnival air. Back then no doubt some of the body builders were using (dare I say it?) ... DRUGS! to make their muscles gigantic. I mean look at Steve. It's like he was hot-cast in bronze. Back then no one cared about steroids. But, and this *was* actually scandalous, there might have been a few (read most) of these fellows who were *psst, psst* (*whisper*) homo-sexual! Now if *that* news got out it would really rock the house, or in this case, the sand. Today gay is the new black and the *juice* is scandalous. Next I fully expect pork rinds to make a comeback as a health food.

The sun has set on old Muscle Beach but the memory lingers on.

There were several women body builders and there were even little kid body builders. The women were generally quite tiny with dramatic chests. I think the look was better then but maybe I'm just old fashioned. You decide.

Long before Schwarzenegger and Hulk Hogan showed up in the 70s there was a real innocence at the Beach. Of course that could be because I was kid. But it's more



Then



Now



SHOO FLY LANDING



Shoo Fly Landing 1880s

Before the iron freight train tracks were laid there were trains of another sort wending their way to the shore. Some were miles long with up to 500 mules broken up into teams of 10 or 20. The most famous one was the 20 Mule Team from Death Valley. The mule teams hauled borax, wheat, tar and all manner of goods and chattels in these trains to Shoo Fly Landing. The arrival of the railroads brought a halt to these colorful car-



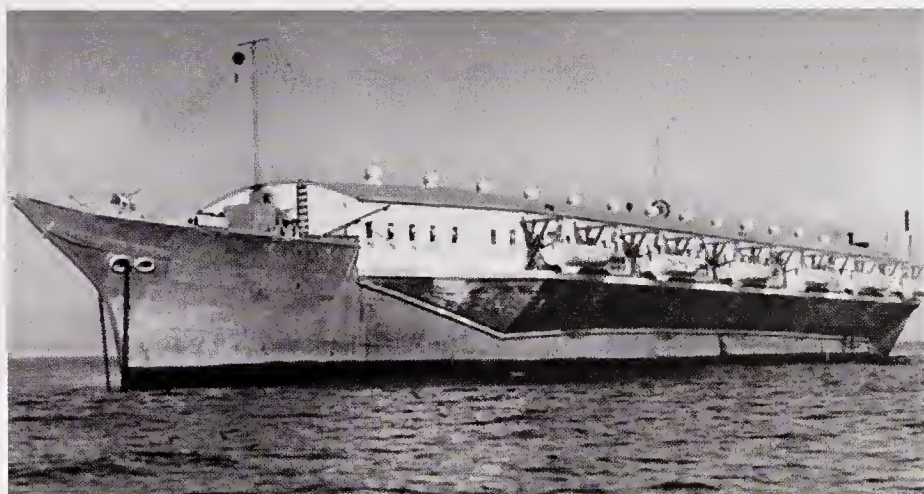
avans. When the railroads came they came with a vengeance. Two rival companies vied for the business in Los Angeles and in 1886 a price war broke out. A one-way ticket from St. Louis was \$125 in 1886. On March 6th 1887 it was \$12. By the 9th it fell to \$4 and a few days later you could go 2/3rds of the way across the United States for \$1. Thousands swarmed aboard the trains. This led to the first real estate explosion in Los Angeles when vast swaths of property were quickly carved up into lots. These lots were traded like hot internet stocks and as long as the lots kept flipping everyone was making money. Finally a shortage of hard cash lead to a resounding crash. Twas ever thus, eh?

Anyway, the name Shoo Fly Landing didn't seem dignified enough so the place came to be known as Santa Monica instead of Shoo Fly. A big mistake in my opinion. Before the age of the automobile and the trolley, Shoo Fly was a full day's wagon ride from Los Angeles. Once there was a way to get to the beach more quickly everybody showed up and the wild rumpus began. Santa Monica had its pleasure pier like so many towns but they had a twist that made it special. Gambling.

In the 1920s gambling was illegal in the United States (except for Nevada) so visionary businessmen bought ships and anchored them outside the 3 mile limit in international waters. They opened for customers and the customers came. The greatest of the ships was the S. S. Rex. Big Tony Cornero, a convicted bootlegger recently sprung from prison, opened the Rex 3.1 miles offshore. The \$600,000 project was financed by the authentic gangster Bugsy Siegel and George Raft who played a gangster in the movies.



The ship could accommodate 2,000 revelers at a time and had a staff of 325. The main ballroom featured 3 alternating orchestras which in high season played 24 hours a day, a dance floor to cut the Charleston on, and, more importantly, a palatial casino to lose your money in. There were hundreds of slot machines, a 400 seat bingo hall, and a horse parlor where the results of the races were beamed in by shortwave radio. Gamblers could pick from craps, roulette, blackjack, chuck-a-luck, high spade, wheel of fortune, Chinese lottery, stud poker, faro and a high stakes poker game in the captain's cabin when available. Since there was no captain, it was frequently available. The operation was estimated to net Big Tony \$300,000 per month. This income wasn't taxable as the ship was not in the United States. People were simply mad for the Rex.



The lovely S. S. Rex

Some bluenose shore dwellers looked on this armada anchored out in front of their town with horror. I mean sure there were narcotics, hookers and gambling but a person has to have fun right? Well Santa Monica Police Chief Robert 'Dick' Dice (his real name) didn't think so and he tried to strangle the fun by leading a charge on the Rex. Big Tony was not one to give up easily and he held the cops off for 3 days with fire hoses in what came to be known as the Battle of Santa Monica Bay. Finally he surrendered, claiming he needed a haircut.

The DA maintained that the Rex was actually not outside the 3 mile limit because Santa Monica Bay wrapped around in such a fashion that it created an inland waterway.

Big Tony presented evi-

The Feds dumping slots

dence that the bay was actually in fact a *bight*—a coastal indentation, and Big Tony won the case on appeal. Big Tony immediately reopened but was finally forcibly evicted in 1939 when the then State Attorney General, Earl Warren, raided all the ships and tossed the gambling equipment into the sea where it remains to this day. Big Tony moved to Vegas where he would be more appreciated and opened the S.S. Rex Casino taking his chuck-a-luck with him.

The day the coppers were throwing the roulette wheels overboard Marion Davies and her friends were watching the hijinx from a telescope on the porch of



The Rex in Vegas

her bungalow. Marion was a colossal movie star in the 20s. She had sufficient talent to play wacky girl Friday parts in the more than 100 films in which she appeared, starred in and even produced. Her paycheck was somewhat bigger than her talent and she was the highest paid actress in Hollywood for a time because her boyfriend was William Randolph Hearst. Randy was a man who could make things happen.

Marion's bungalow was the largest house for a hundred miles around and is said to have cost around \$7 million in 1923. That's how much the 450 foot tall Los Angeles City Hall cost which was built at the same time. She shelled out another \$7 million for knickknacks. The bungalow had 110 rooms including 34 bedrooms. These people lived BIG, plenty of closet space for darn sure. You had to go all the way to San Simeon to find a grander house which was Randy's mountain shack.



There are bigger houses today but they aren't at the beach

in our own Zeppelin, I wish I could have seen the Marx Brothers bounding into Marion's 110 foot pool in top hat and tails.

Randolph Hearst's house is still around but sadly Marion's place in Shoo Fly only lasted 30 years. One of the guesthouses is now a swim and tennis club but the rest is a parking lot. Today Aaron Spelling's house in Beverly Hills is bigger but he'll never take tea with Garbo.

Nowadays Santa Monica has lost the luster it had when there were 12 casinos anchored out front though today it does have a dozen moth-eaten tableaux at Christmas along the promenade at the beach depicting scenes from the New Testament. These dioramas are sponsored by churches in honor of the birth and childhood of Jesus—this in a town composed mostly of collapsed Catholics, escaped Mormons and gay people who tend to look askance at a tradition that calls for their wholesale extermination by stoning in the village square.



Too damn many teeth if you ask me

The neighborhood was pretty terrific in the 30s. It was known as the Gold Coast or Rolls Royce Row. Marion's neighbors included: Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, Mae West, Louis B. Mayer, Samuel and Francis Goldwyn, Norma Shearer, Irving Thalberg, Anita Loos, Jack Warner, Cary Grant, Clark Gable, and Paulette Goddard.

I've been to some A-list Hollywood parties and they are as fabulous as you imagine them to be but Old Hollywood cannot be duplicated and even though we felt pretty special flying along the coast

In the beginning the dioramas starred a wilted troupe of superannuated emporium mannequins but the local villagers whined that the plaster thespians were either too spookily hollow-eyed or too beguiling to be actors in a biblical pageant. Perhaps if they had garnished these ossified entertainers with fur boas and fishnets they could have gone for more of a Mardi Gras theme. But no, the organizers were serious about their ecclesiastical stagecraft so they recast the parts and now the manikins look like they used to work at Mervyn's. It is just a bit weird to see a confused baby Jesus being eyeballed by Chinese tourists, surfers and gang bangers with a Ferris wheel spinning in the background and joggers gyrating to their tunes as they sashay down the sidewalk. No really, it's funny especially when you consider that the manikin industry is dominated by *Jews*. Quick, someone call Mel Gibson! After all he lives just down the street. (Mannequin vs. manikin. You decide.)

In honor of the solstice in 2009, Atheists United, Southern California's largest affiliation of the unaffiliated, erected a simple sign wishing onlookers, "Reason's Greetings." It was stolen instantly. In 2010, the AU folks put up a playful image—a gnome with the face of Charles Darwin and the same message. Charlie's face was immediately bashed in and he was kicked over the cliff into traffic all the while turning the other cheek.



Some atheist and Chuck Darwin just before he got kicked off a cliff

PACIFIC PALISADES

Several years ago some guy came into my restaurant, Buck's of Woodside, and, shaking my hand, informed me that his name was Richard Reardon and he was running for governor. He'd been mayor of Los Angeles and I instantly saw the possibilities. We hammered out a deal that if

I threw my considerable weight behind his campaign I'd get an ambassadorship to Saint-Tropez or something. Dick said he was a venture capitalist (music to us in Silicon Valley) and was also in the restaurant business. He was very interested in my food and labor costs (so he said) and we had a lively talk about the 'biz.' Mayor Riordan practiced his acceptance speech on me, "Thank you my fellow Californians for electing me governor. Governor Davis has spent four years screwing this state and now it's my turn."

Reardon and his kids own what for years has been the biggest restaurant in the LA area and its specialty is Maine Lobster. For years Gladstone's had a brobdingnagian lobster named Spike as restaurant's mascot. Spike weighed as much as a two year old boy with rocks in his pockets. Now, Gladstone's is this massive place and they get their fair share of movie stars so in between the lip inflation and the ass deflation



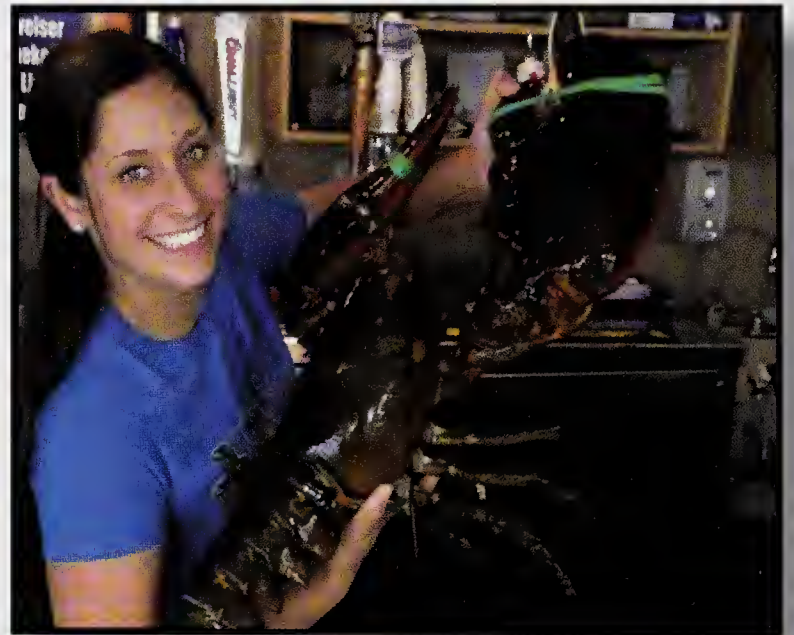
Mary's dream



one of said movie stars had plenty of time to meddle as her incisions healed. On one of these spare days, the long out of work C-lister, Mary Tyler Moore, felt that it was cruel and unusual to keep this venerable lobster imprisoned in a tank when it could otherwise be frolicking in the deeps with its ilk (like in a Disney film) and she insisted that this antique gentleman be set free. Spike was old, at least 60, and had huge claws strong enough to

rip the head off a rottweiler. But Spike barely moved and didn't look exactly frolicsome. Through it all hubbubaloo Spike remained stoic and kept his own council. The manager told Mary he wasn't interested in springing Spike because Gladstone's was his home and besides he was from Maine and wouldn't survive in the Pacific. Moreover, the manager pointed out, they actually *ate* lobsters at Gladstone's—as food! Egads, boiled alive! Patrons gleefully dismembered them and chewed them right up. Upping her game Mary offered to buy the beast for \$1,000. Management declined. This was too much for Mary and she raised a ruckus by cobbling together a picket line of other out of work actor friends (which there was no short supply of in LA) and demanded a boycott of Gladstone's until poor ol Spike was released from his briny prison. The conflict caught the attention of the ever vigilant Rush Limbaugh. The perennially ravenous Rush, always with a weather eye toward cheesing off as many people as possible, offered to waddle on down and eat the lobster in situ and pay \$2,000 for the privilege. With her blood up, Mary redoubled her crusade and what followed was a clangorous siege along the placid seaside. Atta girl Mary, you really know how to pick em.

At first the owners were amused but as the days wore on and the picket line got longer and deeper it built to a real rowdydow and Mary's shenanigans began to cut into business. Finally the Gladstoneians threw in the (warm, damp) towel (followed no doubt by drawn butter and lemon wedges) and, surrendering Spike, told her she could have the lobster and to come and get him. Vindicated, Mary arranged for a seawater tank equipped cargo plane to fly the old soldier home to live out his golden years. But Spike *hated* flying and took the big dirt nap somewhere between Denver and Dubuque. I hope Mary snagged those lemons. Last time I heard from Mary she was living in New York City forcing her neighbors on 5th Avenue to shell out \$60,000 for unnecessary birdhouses for the peregrine falcons that nested on the ledges of their co-op.



MALIBU

The name of the town comes from a Chumash Indian word *maliwo* or ‘the surf sounds loudly’ — cute, but today the waves are drowned out by the sound of Courtney Love’s band, Hole, and an Indian couldn’t get a job trimming the marigolds.

Malibu is famous for its fires (my mother’s house once half-burned in one) followed seemingly seconds later by mudslides (took the rest of the house). This affects mostly the cliff dwellers whereas *The Colony* escapes with a little smoke and dust. Malibu has a higher density of TV and movie celebrities who call it home than anywhere else on the planet thus making it either the most or the least important place on earth. Countless TV shows have been shot there including the top TV show in the world in the 1980s, *Baywatch*. It’s shows like this that make me see why Islamic fundamentalists hate us.

Malibu is also home to one of the most unusual homes ever built or in this case, rebuilt. Tony Duquette got rich designing costume jewelry and he did well enough to afford a 55 acre spread in the hills where he created a house — unusual even by



And the overhead bins come in handy

Malibu standards. He paid 35 grand for the body and wings of a 747 but it cost a bit more to transport and reassemble. They must have lost the blueprints along the way because Tony’s house has been reconstructed in a condition that would preclude flight but it sure makes a soaring comment about modern times. It’s more than a clever reuse of an old plane. It’s lyrical and compelling and because the pieces are so darn big, and Tony had such a sharp artist’s eye, it has instantly become iconic. He said, “The 747 represented the single largest industrial achievement in modern history and its abandonment in the deserts make a statement about the obsolescence and ephemeral nature of our technology and our society.” And it’s fireproof, a real plus in Malibu.

The house had to be registered with the FAA to avoid the inevitable calls from pilots that there is a downed jet in the hills. The home is well worth a detour inland if you happen to be flying along the coast in a Zeppelin and if you do the homeowner might come outside and wave.

Not everyone in the area is quite so happy to see visitors cruising overhead. Along this celebrity encrusted shore one discovers Barbra Streisand’s house infesting a bluff at Point Dume.

We know the exact location because of an incident when a photographer documented the entire coastline including a picture of her house. Barbra decided she needed \$50 million from this guy for the pain she had suffered when 6 people (including two of her attorneys) downloaded the



photo of her house. Once it went to court 420,000 folks checked the site out—in a single month—and hundreds of people showed up at her door and at the beach. The image appeared on tee shirts and in a popular YouTube parody. This spawned the term *The Streisand Effect* which is the phenomenon whereby an attempt to hide or remove a piece of information on the internet has the effect of coming around to bite you on the bee-hind. The Streisand Effect joins other laws such as the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, The Peter Principle and Moore's Law under the mantle of Eponymous Laws and Principles and will no doubt be what she is remembered for. Oh, and Babs was laughed out of court.

Cher's house is there too. It's so big I think it has it's own zip code. I love some of the crazy stories about these folks like giving the gardener the Bentley when it hits year 3. Funny how we lavish so much money and bandwidth on celebrities. When you're a kid you play a game called—would I rather be rich or famous? Famous often wins. When you grow up it almost never does.

Flying over Malibu changed my life. It's 21 miles long and as you fly to the north of the downtown the houses go from merely splendid to positively phantasmagorical. At one point we spied what looked like a ring of grass huts and a drum circle on a \$20 million dollar lot on the beach. Next to that is what looks like Iron Man's house and along the sand you fly over 11, count





'em, 11 houses owned by Larry Ellison (probably several more by now).

A note on Larry Ellison: I remember him when he was just a billionaire. He lives in my town and in fact many other towns as well. He has the reputation of being a tough guy and a bit hard to know



Dylan over Malibu

but I don't think it's true. He has certainly always been nice to me.

At this writing he's the 5th wealthiest man on earth and some say he thinks he's pretty hot stuff what with his dames, yachts and owning a Hawaiian island. What I know about him is that he has a solid relationship with his kids and he is working quietly on several environmental projects that one day will demonstrate that he is a major player in the preservation of life on earth. If he thinks he's God who am I to argue?



*Owner on the left: "This is just my weekend place."
Owner on the right: "This is just my weekend place."*

LEO CARRILLO BEACH

When people flock to this popular spot and ask the beachgoers who Leo Carrillo was I guarantee you they will have no idea. Everyone does know that California was Mexican in the old days as the first settlers were from Mexico and Spain but their children were born here. These pioneers were known as Californios in the early 1800s.



Uncle Leo in his legendary hat

Leo Carrillo's great great grandfather was on the Portola expedition and his great grandfather was the last Mexican governor of California. When the Americans seized power, the state constitution called for recognition of the land rights of these Californios (the same promise that the Spanish made to the Indians when the missions were secularized). As late as the mid 1800s the population was overwhelmingly Spanish speaking and even the newspapers in the 1850s were bilingual. Soon the enthusiasm for including these folks under the banner of the red, white and blue faded and things went increasingly downhill for the Californios.

In the 1930s Leo Carrillo along with Lupe Vélez were pretty much the only actors who were both Mexican-American and movie stars—however dim. Generally Leo played bandito roles and if anyone remembers him now it was for playing Poncho, second banana to the Cisco Kid on TV (“Oh, Sees-coh”). In 1956 a real Mexican-American, even one from a founding

family couldn't play a lead but could get booked as a stereotypical sidekick or perhaps a criminal or maybe a kindly old man who gets shot by accident. Leo took it in stride.

Leo had other interests besides Hollywood including being an avid conservationist. It was he who convinced Randolph Hearst to donate his castle to the people of California. In a nearly meaningless but nonetheless interesting twist of fate Lupe Vélez was the girlfriend of Orson Wells at the time he made *Citizen Kane* which was the cinematic indictment of Randolph Hearst. If I collect enough of these useless facts I can write a book...

Leo was the great uncle of my mother's second husband's youngest sister's first husband's brother-in-law. Leo was the grand patriarch of this immense clan, which, through the miracle of modern marriage—I was part of. I met Uncle Leo at an annual family jamboree in Santa Barbara in 1960. I was 11 and had seen his movies and the TV show so I shyly wandered over to him at the picnic. As I stood near I saw him reach into a bag of Oreos on the table only to find the bag uninhabited by even a single crumb. I was right in front of him and had the last one in my hand. He looked at me levelly and said in his movie star voice, “I see you have the last of the cookies. I hope you enjoy it.” I dropped my eyes and colored in shame. I held the cookie out to him though I knew its half moon bite devalued it not a little. Then he said with a mustachioed grin, “No really, I hope you enjoy it. I eat far too many of them.” It was the only time he ever spoke to me. So sure, I remember Leo Carrillo.

SAN NICHOLAS ISLAND

From our vantage above the shoreline we could see San Nicholas Island clearly, far to the west. Required reading for many a California school child in the last half of the 20th century was the book, *The Island Of The Blue Dolphins*. It tells the story of an Indian woman who spent many years living with her several dogs for company on this outermost Channel Island. Today the island is an off limits military base (we have a penchant for quartering a few bored soldiers on islands to stare dreamily at the ocean). Years ago I went abalone diving there and from the water in the swaying kelp contemplated the wind struck shore and tried to conjure and image of what it must have been like for the woman to live in such isolation.

Indians inhabited the island for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years. A 13th century grave has recently been uncovered. The island is 60 miles from the mainland and the crossing would have been harrowing in reed boats so it was probably not attempted with regularity.

In 1811 a ship populated with Alaskan hunters dropped anchor depositing these Aleuts on the island to take otters. It is surmised that they commenced to massacring otters as well as all the

native men and then took up with the women. The Indian women then ambushed (again contemporary speculation) the Aleuts and eventually the only people left were women and children. In 1835 a ship pulled close to the shore, again for the otters, and found the forlorn little colony. The clan was brought aboard in haste as the weather was kicking up. The captain deemed it prudent to run offshore due to a sudden squall. One resident still looking for her child, was left behind. Some reports say that the wild dogs ate the child but no one knows. Life is fragile in such circumstances.

Arriving in Santa Barbara the captain announced his intention to return for the woman but he was immediately dispatched to San Francisco but his ship was driven onto the rocks in a storm taking his good intentions with him. This lone woman was soon forgotten until sailors landed and found footprints and an unfinished basket near the beach. They scoured the island and found her in a hut made of whalebones in which she had been living for 18



years. Wrapping herself in a cloak made of cormorant feathers she cheerfully went with the sailors taking along with a lunch basket containing a rotting seal head for a shipboard snack.

Her rescuer George Nidever and his wife took her in and she was the toast of Santa Barbara. None of the Chumash in the area spoke her language and in 6 weeks she died of the rich diet or perhaps an illness. Her cormorant cloak was sent to the Vatican as a gift to the pope where it was promptly discarded.

VENTURA

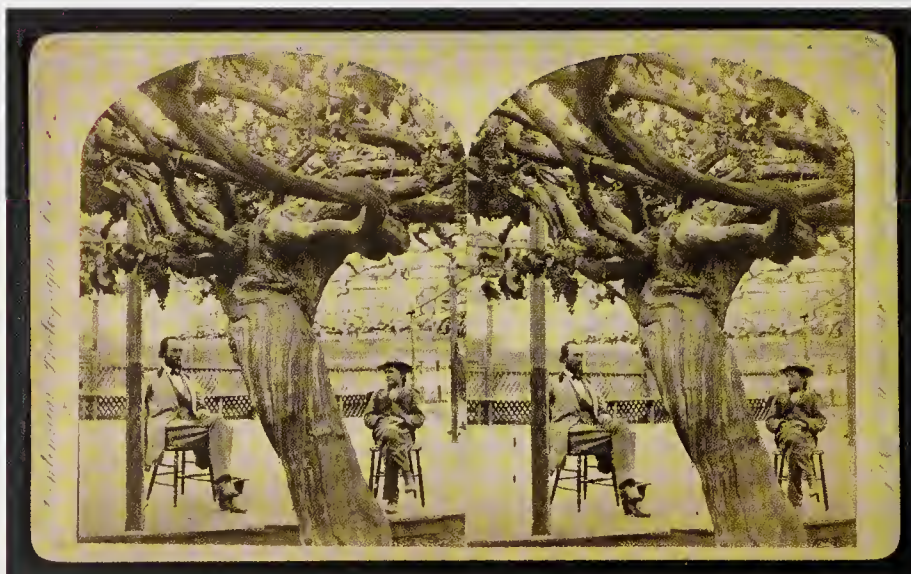


One of the many rushes that California has been witness to was orange fever. I like to think that it was the oranges that drove my mother mad with a desire to come to California. Oranges weren't exactly exotic in Minnesota in the 1950s but they were expensive and we generally shared one between the 3 of us. When our little tribe came west we could pick them right off the trees by the side of the road and no one cared or at least they didn't care at night. An orange still invokes in me a sense of awe tinted with a touch of contrition from our late night raids. We borrowed other things, even cars sometimes, but who hasn't stolen a car or two?

In 1954 we moved into a little house on a dusty back road in Ojai, a town just inland from Ventura. Everybody had orange, lemon and avocado trees in

the yard and most of the fruit rotted wantonly on the ground. All this gangrenous fruit made the neighborhood smell thickly of a diner dumpster on the 4th of July. But man, did it beat the dickens out of Minnesota with half a year of sooty snow and 3 lb mosquitoes dive bombing you the other half. A flock of those Lilliputian vampires could drain the blood out of a kid in 6 seconds.

CARPINTERIA



Carpinteria was named by Gaspar Portola as he wandered around in 1769 naming everything in his path. He dubbed it Carpinteria when he saw the locals shaping planks for their wooden canoes on the beach. The inconsequent name stuck but at least he didn't name it Piojos Pecogiendo for the act of picking lice out of each other's braids. Nothing has ever happened in Carpinteria. Nothing except for it being home to a famous grapevine.

Not exactly trick, but at least trick-y, photography

Even in the 1860s it was called the largest grapevine on earth (ignoring no doubt the Mediterranean and the Middle East). It is said to have produced as much as 4,000 bunches of grapes weighing 7 tons in a good year. Probably exaggerated. But it was 5ish feet in circumference and the branches spread 200 feet in all directions. It was considered such a national treasure that it was hacked into pieces in 1876 and shipped to Washington DC where it was reassembled. Paper leaves were appended to the branches and it was put on display in the Centennial Exposition at the Smithsonian as an example of Californian progress. Then they shot a pair of dwindling condors and stuffed the corpses with wood shavings and mailed them along as another example of the spiffy rummage of the west. They also executed a household of otters and posed the cadavers in a lifelike diorama. Their numbers had dwindled from over a million to a few hundred in 60 years. It's a wonder they didn't snap the tip off Mt. Whitney and Pony Express it east as well.

SANTA BARBARA

Santa Barbara is my favorite city on the California coast or maybe anywhere. The air itself wraps around you like a sexy beast and the most you ever have to wear is a cormorant robe on a rainday which is hardly ever. Weather consists mainly of sunshine with the occasional neighborhood-annihilating inferno. It does get a bit dry in SB and if conditions are just right, which is about once every 5 years the wind pours off the face of the coastal range in a rage of hellfire.

The incendiary nature of Santa Barbara has been a given since the first settlers showed up. On one day in October of 2003 there were 7 separate uncontrolled wildfires in Santa Barbara County. This is a pale comparison to the lighting storms that ignited fires in California in 2008 when over a thousand fires lit up the mid part of the state in a two hour period. Santa Barbara combusts with stunning regularity. This is the result of a very dry climate combined



"Grab the cat!"

with one of nature's true miracles— the Devil Wind or simoon. It certainly has a way of keeping the suburbanites in this paradise humble.

The inhabitants were lucky no one struck a match on June 17th in 1859 because if they had, the fire might have had a really good day. By 11am the air was over 100° and this wasn't recorded on some saloon thermometer advertising sarsaparilla but by a U.S. coastal survey ship monitoring humidity and temperature in the harbor. By noon it became very hot— 110° and this, mind you, was on the water.



A hot day in SoCal

And it kept getting hotter. Birds were seen to fall from the sky, farm animals went toes up in the field and a fierce blast scorched the windward side of the hanging fruit. The people were saved by their thick adobe walls but all the crops became just so much vegetable jerky. Just past 2pm the temperature stalled at 133° and stayed there for two hours. By 7pm it had dropped back to 77° . This record stood until the 1920s when Libya took the title and Libya lost it to Death Valley at 135° in the 1950s. Good, they can have it.

The mechanism at work here is quite interesting. When conditions just so, the hot air buildup in the Santa Inez Valley to the east rises, caused by the intense heat; it then spills over the 4,000' ridge and drops toward the sea. This causes a temperature increase due to *adiabatic compression*. This typically happens late in the day, hence the local name Sundowner Winds. As the hot air descends the increased pressure results in a 5.5° temperature increase for every thousand foot drop. It has never been this hot in Santa Barbara since but it's only a matter of time.



Before they got better jobs on Wall Street

Mostly, though, the weather is perfect or better so there is plenty of sunshine in which to cavort. One popular game of old was to beat the bejesus out of grizzly bears. This pleasant Sunday afternoon pastime involved releasing an enraged grizzly — all teeth and claws — into the ring made of upturned tree root tangles and induct an equally disenchanted mature male bovine armed with a pair of sharp horns. This was a game invented in the Late Middle Ages in Russia and it was considered good clean fun 200 years ago. Keep in mind this was an era before even the Etch A Sketch had been invented so you had to find your fun where you could. On Sundays, after listening to the padre explain the miracle of virgin birth and eternal damnation — it was playtime. There was singing, dancing and jugs of the bitter local wine and perhaps a drop or two of mescal.

The Californios had discovered that a bear and a longhorn bull were pretty evenly matched and the bout could go on for as long as an hour. The loser was promptly eaten (along with the winner) and the party raged on. These fandangos were very popular and came to replace Lenten days. Lent is where Catholics were taught to do *without* as opposed to feast days where they were advised to do *with more*. This became the very essence of life at the beach and no doubt led to the Spring Break phenomenon.

Santa Barbara is bounded at its borders by the homes of two crazy ladies who are about as far from spring breakers as the KFC Double Down is to caviar and toast points. As we cruised up from Carpinteria we came upon the first of these houses this one owned by Huguette Clark who died in 2011 at the age of 104.

Huguette was the sole heir of a Montana copper baron who had lived large in NYC in the 19th century. He built the most awe-stentatious house in Manhattan on 5th Avenue at 77th. It had 121 rooms and nothing in that town ever equaled it though there were several that came close. It cost about \$150 million in the coin of today and the mansion was only there for 20 years.

Huguette's 23 acre estate, Bellosguardo, is perched atop a bluff overlooking the sea and has been kept in perfect condition ever since Huguette's mother built it in 1920s. Once her mother



I could live here

gone in to be treated for serious face cancer and they cured her. She liked it there—so, even though she was not ill or even disabled, she preferred to stay in the room. There she designed countless doll

went sailing on the River Styx none of the dwindling family came west and the house was tended by generations of caretakers. There were flowers on the tables and 1930s limousines in the garage—all kept at the ready for a possible visit by Huguette. She lived in New York and had not been to the house in Santa Barbara for 58 years when she died. Huguette was disinclined to come out west or for that matter to go out at all so for the last 21 years of her life she lived entirely in a simple hospital room. She had



The view from Huguette's room

houses using a constant flow of photos which Huguette marked up and sent back to the maker in Japan where they were constructed. Once completed these models were shipped to one of her several houses. The hospital management assumed they would inherit the bulk of her estate but when they cottoned on to the fact that this wasn't in the cards they relegated her to an even less grand room than the plain one she had been in.

Huguette was once offered 100 million for Bellosguardo but she wasn't interested in selling it, nor her 24 room apartment on 5th Avenue in NYC, nor her Stradivarius violins or her Renoirs. Her

estate was worth over 300 million when she expired. She left the bulk to charity and to her personal attendant.

The thing is she wasn't really crazy. She was just eccentric and actually crafted a fairly interesting life. More on her in an excellent book, *Empty Mansions*.

Early beach life in Santa Barbara is recounted in Richard Henry Dana's pivotal book *Two Years Before the Mast*. Richard was a student at Harvard when he told his parents his eyes hurt and he needed to take a couple of years off to go boating. Kids, right? He shipped out of Boston arriving in California in 1833.



This Strad found in a closet in Huguette's 5th Ave apartment under a pile of 8 new brassieres, size 32a, from the 1930s (note: I should add these to my spat collection)



"Oh Jees, ya got me fair and square."

definitive work about the region just before California began to come to and flex its burly biceps.

If you read one book other than this one about the history of the coast read *Two Years Before the Mast*. Richard's book gives one a glimpse into a world filled with pernicious ship captains, vivacious weddings, intense work, vivid privation and a sense that the future will look nothing like the past. Dana went home and lived a long and successful life as a lawyer and politician. In the 1860s he returned to California and was heralded as the hero he was. Be sure when you read the book you get a copy with his afterward written 25 years after his initial trip.

Recollecting Richard's junkets up and down the coast from our seats in the comfy cabin of the Eureka with hot coffee, "*Hey hold on! I said no mayo on this sandwich!*" sorry...is hysterically easy compared to life on a wooden ship with its dripping forecastle (pronounced *foksul*), beastly food and relentless toil. But hey, I once had to get up at 4 am to go to the airport so I've certainly had my share of tribulation.

With the arrival of the white man the lifestyle of the locals was soon on its way out. Starting in San Diego and sweeping up the state as far as Sonoma a wave of soul-saving padres and attendant soldiers plodded north digging in the dirt, raising mud missions and planting the fallen Indians in the now abundant holes.

The locals were vermin infested, vile and not entirely human—according to contemporary accounts. They sure had some elaborate religions though. In the Santa Barbara area the principal god was Chinigchinich, the giver of life, the god of the dance, harvest and weather—a sort of Swiss Army Knife of practical deism. He could be cruel like when he took your family through accident or disease but he could be kind when he provided the rain and the fish. To the locals the god brought by the white man seemed not to care much for their welfare and was fixated on hustling the Indian's to —"The country from which no man returns."

It's the oldest story in the world—where the new supplants the old. It is now generally accepted that when the Asian immigration took place during the last Ice Age about 13,000 years back. The New World quickly filled with out-of-towners and they killed everything they could jamb a spear into like the eohippus (the little horse), the new world camel, the mammoth and saber toothed salmon. You're thinking I mean saber toothed tiger and sure they were in California

Before gold, the cow was king or rather his skin was. In 1830 a hide was worth one dollar on the beach and they became known as California dollars. Richard was tasked with wading out into the shiverish water with a stack of cowhides balanced on his topmost to waiting row-boats. The municipality lacked even a rudimentary pier. It was his 1835 book that revealed to the American public the harsh nature of shipboard life and it went a long way to help seamen secure better treatment. The book also popularized California and when the Gold Rush took off a few years later it was the only guide to the coast. It is still considered the

too but 12,000 years ago there were saber toothed salmon 9 feet long in the rivers. All fell to the invading Asiatics and were eaten in the tacos. When the Spanish and later the Americans showed up they seized the land and did the same thing but this time the invaders took aim at the people.

The Spanish invaders really did come to count coup (*coup* a French term—raising your status by lowering someone else's) on the locals by saving their souls but the next wave of immigrants had other intentions. Long before iPhones, in the early 1800s, the economy of the West was powered by leather, meat and fur with an unusual collection



Try keeping your powder dry in this tub

the 20 miles to Santa Cruz Island where they would slay otters with flintlocks. Seems like a hard way to make a living. A team consisted of one marksman and one Hawaiian Kanaka who would jump overboard to retrieve the otter drifting in the kelp after it was shot. The sharpshooter would then haul the Kanaka back to the boat with a rope that had been tied to the swimmer's leg. Tedious, dangerous and cold, but it was considered a good living. (In an amazing twist, the original coonskin cap guy on television was Fess Parker who thrilled us kids in the 50s as Davy Crockett. He ended up being a big wheel in Santa Barbara. Irony or destiny?)

of adversaries grappling for dominance. English seal and otter hunting ships plied the waters around the Channel Islands off Santa Barbara. Alaskan Aleuts hunted from these ships in kayaks with bows and arrows. They competed for this declining resource with the Americans who were rough-hewn, bare-knuckled Tennessee mountain men.

The Americans had come overland on horseback along the Sante Fe Trail and, arriving at the beach, fashioned cowhide and tree branch boats caulked with beach tar. These backwoodsmen based their boats on a design from the Mandan tribe back east. Their coon-skin caps planted firmly on their heads the mountain men padded these wobbly death traps



"What a loovley coat, daahling. Is it otter?"

As the otters relocated in ever greater numbers from the Santa Barbara kelp to Chinese factories the hunters took to shooting one another over this swiftly disappearing resource. More people died of gunshot poisoning in California in the Otter Wars than in the Civil and both World Wars together. Subsequent wars would be waged in the area between Portuguese fishermen and the Japanese over abalone and lobster and folks were killed in those conflicts as well.

In 1840 a single otter pelt could bring as much \$50. Prices rose as the species became rarer. During the 1880s, a pelt could be worth \$165 in London. By 1903 a single pelt sold for \$1,125—a hundred times that of sable. There was another prize part of the otter that they don't teach about in school. This was the penis bone. Many mammals have them apparently. This bone was scarce and just the right size for fashion-forward tie clips. No one wants otter now when they can get tasty rhino horn.

The English were not the fey dandies they are today and they shot at the Americans who were more than happy to return fire in skirmishes fought over the otter pelts. There were a dozen deaths and the otters didn't fair so well either. Feuds resulting in gunfire were common in the good ol days but it scares the women and children when you blaze away at your fellow settlers so it became more appropriate to stop randomly blasting people on the street and formally declare your intent to look your neighbor in the eye and shoot him in the heart from 20 paces. This was pretty common until 1849 when dueling was made illegal by the California Constitution and was punishable by losing your right to vote or hold public office. Of course this was the same document that declared English *and* Spanish to be the official languages of the State of California so go ahead—fire when ready.

The era of the horse thieves

A single horse is a mount
Two might be a team
A string is 3 or 4
Maybe, 6 for a passel
Beyond that but still countable is a remuda
And then you have a herd

In the 1700s there were so many horses on the ranchos in California that it was customary to grab any old steed when yours was tired or lame even if it didn't strictly belong to you. Sure



people had favorites but the rest were essentially free public transit. In the 18 teens horses became so prolific that they competed with the cattle for grass. It was not unknown to round up wild horses and drive them over the cliffs into the sea to tamp the population.

By 1820 the supply of equines tightened and suddenly they became worth rustling. In 1821 a band of desperadoes purloined a passel of horses north of Santa Barbara and sold them off. At the same time the following year there they were back again, with more men, and they rustled a remuda. In the third year they returned and hijacked an entire herd but *a-ha*, this time the local ranchers were waiting for them. The villains had planned to drive the horses all the way to Texas and this would have been a completely boneheaded idea even if 50 armed men weren't chasing them—which they were. It all came to a bad end with a walloping shoot-em-up in the desert near San Bernardino where most of the horses died along with a good many of the rustlers.

William Brewer was one of the notable residents of Santa Barbara and wrote a terrific book, *Up and Down California 1860-64*. In those years Brewer was the number two to George Whitney, of mountaintop fame, when they tramped 15,000 miles around the state measuring mountains, lakes and everything that wouldn't move and shot at everything that did. Or nearly everything. These fellows were tough but they were no gunslingers so they generally left the grizzlies alone. Rattlers, deer and antelope yes, but it was hard to kill one of these bears officially known as *Ursus arctos horribilis*. If you winged a griz they had a frightening tendency to run over to you and, ripping your head from your spine, swallow it in a gulp.

Oh, I promised you another crazy lady at the other end of town so we sailed over her well known villa in Hope Ranch clawed to its perch on the cliffs overlooking the beach. Wendy McCaw moved there after divorcing Craig McCaw in what the Guinness record keepers listed as the largest divorce settlement on record. Actually, she shared the title with the arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi's wife. This was back in about 2001 when a billion dollar settlement was considered pretty hefty. The new record holder is a Russian woman with 4.5 billion (though she is having trouble collecting). I say, pay her, but it isn't up to me.

So Wendy moved from Atherton to Santa Barbara and noticed some poor-people (which is everybody) cavorting on her beach. Now even she knew that the proletariats were entitled to dip their brats up to the high tide line but her deed included lands above that boundary as far as the bluff. She asked them to leave. They did not. She *told* them to leave. Again the commoners ignored her. She sued to perfect her rights. The local newspaper lit up against her. She bought the paper. The editors advised her to back down. She cleaned house. Wendy ultimately lost the case and now everyone knows where she lives and some folks make a point of playing loud music on her beach. Amazingly, Soraya Khashoggi the fellow Guinness record holder lives right next door. Barbra surely must have known about this business and still...

But again I exaggerate. Wendy isn't crazy, but one wonders why some folks make their own lives more difficult than they need to be.

If you walk along the beaches of Santa Barbara today you quickly become shod in a nice skein of tar. Sort of glued on flip flops that neither flip nor flop. There is tar everywhere. Out of towners often gawk at the many oil rigs a few miles off the coast and register dismay with a government that allows so much goo to cavalierly dribble all round the otherwise pristine shore. Actually the rigs don't leak. The oil seeps quite naturally from the ocean floor in the Santa Barbara Channel. Drill a water well in this region and you can just as likely hit oil. 'Damn, oil again!' One of the biggest oil fields in the world used to be 12 miles north of Santa Barbara in Goleta.



Kozo Nishino, the skipper of a Japanese oil tanker, came in to fuel his ship at the Ellwood Fuel Depot prior to the War in the early 1930s. While walking with his crew to a formal welcoming ceremony Kozo tripped and fell into a patch of cactus. The sight of the Japanese commander having prickly pear spines unceremoniously pulled from his be-hind sent the nearby oil workers into a laughing fit.

On Feb 23rd, 1942 a Japanese I-400 class submarine surfaced a few miles beyond Santa Barbara in front of the Elwood Oil Field where the UC Santa Barbara campus is today. This vessel had two long range reconnaissance aircraft which could be launched

and then retrieved after landing on its pontoons. Coincidentally at that exact time President Roosevelt was on the radio with a Fireside Chat telling folks to stay calm—just as the pier and oil tanks were being fired on with a single 5.5 inch deck gun from the 400 foot long Japanese submarine. Commander Kozo Nishino was back and this time the oil workers were not laughing.

The sub fired about 20 exploding charges and it really focused everyone's attention. The coastal residents imagined an armada just over the horizon which seemed entirely plausible. It was the first time since the War of 1812 that the continental United States had been fired upon (by a foreigner). No one was injured during the shelling and there was minimal damage but one enlistee was seriously wounded when an unexploded warhead detonated as they were cleaning up. He got the Purple Heart and was the only soldier injured by enemy fire on the continent during the entire war.

Keep in mind this was just after the dust-up at Pearl Harbor and everyone was a tiny bit on edge. This was not a good time to open a sushi restaurant in California. This incident caused such panic that the constabularies called "*lights out!*" up and down the coast for the duration and spurred the subsequent roundup of the Japanese folks living on the West Coast.

When you bring up the Internment today there is a shrill waving of index fingers and a lamentation that this was a heinous thing to do. Bear in mind that there was real panic as Pearl Harbor had been a complete surprise and the government had no idea how the next attack would happen. It is also not generally known that initially the Japanese were not ordered into internment camps but rather were ordered off the West Coast so if they had relatives in the east they could go to them and about 10% did. Those who couldn't make it east were ordered by the government into stark towns made of sorrow, sand and snow far out in the desert. They were by every measure prison camps.



Japanese postcard of the shelling

It's easy to look back at our mistakes as a nation and see that Internment was not a humane or productive response. Perhaps if we visualize ourselves looking at our political actions of the present, from the future, we might make better decisions. Today we face a new challenges with mad bombers from parts east and laborers streaming across our southern border. Racial profiling is of dubious benefit and whacking everyone wearing a turban or a sombrero isn't a fix even if it seems logical at first. Those who howl that they want their country back are barking at the Moon.

After the War, things on the coast in Santa Barbara calmed down until the ocean oil drilling became a target of protest as well as the protests around the nukes at San Onofre. Sure, I could get all politically-environmental here, but no. I prefer the really big events—the ones that happened to me. In the summer of 1969 I was driving my beloved Morris Minor Traveler from Berkeley, where I was being schooled, to Los Angeles where the car would spend the summer. I planned to make it up to Canada but ended up in Isla Vista where it was serene and tranquil after the riots I had helped foment at UC Berkeley.

The summer I spent in Isla Vista was the last of a 3 year run of the Summer Of Love which had stumbled to its sandal-clad feet from a patchouli-scented mattress in 1967. By 1970 college campuses were in flames across the nation but none more dramatically than this sleepy university town next to UC Santa Barbara. Before someone lit the match it had been sooo laid back. We ate at macrobiotic restaurants that the health department never bothered; there was no civil government and there were no police unless they were called in from a neighboring town and why call them unless a submarine started shelling?

At the time Isla Vista reportedly had the youngest population of any town in America. I was taking a much needed break from my intense studies of golf, art and Russian writers. With my two friends, John and Ott, we commenced our odyssey in LA with the idea of hitchhiking to Canada. We made our way up the coast for a couple of hours and ended up in this laconic beach town. It was still the morning of the first day when we realized that there was no sense in going any further.

We were young, fit and meeting girls was as simple as standing in the road, checking the car's occupants for bodaciousness and waving them to the curb as they cruised though town scoping out the scene. We were the scene. But in America things began to come unstuck and a hot-pain pie came out of the oven.



Recipe for dissension pie:

Gather together 20,000 students
Feed them brown rice, green tea & colorless LSD,
Add a criminal war in Southeast Asia
Bake until livid!

When the school term commenced Ott and I migrated back upstream to Berkeley to flip ROTC cars over and light them on fire but those who stayed in Isla Vista did us one better.

The Santa Barbara students were looking for a relevant target for the rage we all felt over the draft and the war. There was no federal building in town and no one wanted to drive all the way to LA so vengeance was unleashed on the Bank of America. Some enterprising scholars put the torch to the only bank in town causing a great inconvenience to those cashing dad's checks and it brought a prodigious number of men in blue where previously there had been just peace and love. How it is that buildings made largely of glass, drywall and concrete manage to burn I do not know but trust me, they do.

As one might imagine torching a bank brings a certain degree of enthusiastic attention from the regional constabulary. Indeed it does. But the students proved to be a formidable opposition smashing police cars' windshields and rooftop gumball lights with fusillades of cinder blocks, hibachis, bongos and thousands of rioting students drove the cops from town for a brief time. The police expeditiously rebounded and their numbers were greatly magnified by National Guard soldiers deployed in dump trucks. That's right, dump trucks (today they would come with somewhat more robust vehicles). The guardsmen were ordered to stand in the bed of the trucks with body armor and (I am so not making this up) slingshots with steel ball bearings with orders to



"Ahhhh, I guess I'll be closing my account."

'shoot to annoy' (rather thoughtful, actually). There were even students from the University who were weekend warriors in the Guard and did double duty by rioting one day and suppressing the riot the next.

As soon as the students saw the lads in dump trucks they laid a network of cables that stretched across the streets at neck level. Hey, that's not very nice! The Guards responded by welding posts to the fronts of the truck beds to snap the wires. The melee went on for days. Hundreds were beaten and arrested. One student was attempting to put out a fire someone had lite trying to burn down the Taco Bell and the police shot him dead. With that, the fun was quickly leaked out of this shivaree.

I had studied enough American, French, Roman,

and Russian history to know that this was exactly how revolutions began and we students believed we were well on our way. The fury over Vietnam was real and quite ferocious. Our goal was to end the war and send Nixon packing in shame. We prevailed on these points but nobody won. Ahhhh, except for the North Vietnamese. I guess they actually did win.

The next year in a non-war related incident, three campers were killed on the beach by an ax murderer and the age of innocence was definitely over. Today the war too is over (at least that one is), the hippies are in their 60s and The Man vigilantly plies the byways of Isla Vista. The sun still shines on this beach town but today the town has a reputation of being excessively rapey and is recognized for having the highest level of personal property theft in the nation.

They never rebuilt the B of A.



The men in blue (or camo) are all set for the Garlic Festival



Blue whales with meat



Meatless

SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

Directly in front of the UC campus is Santa Cruz Island. It is one of the Channel Islands and is known as the playground of the blue whale and other exotic animals. The blue is by today's reckoning the largest animal ever to have existed in the 4 1/2 billion year run of life on earth. At one time the whales were able to communicate for hundreds if not thousands of miles using low frequency acoustic songs. Interference from modern shipping and military submarine jamming compromises this ability.

Santa Cruz Island is also the home of the largest marine cave in the world. It can hold a dozen blue whales and they might well hide out there till the era of the oil tanker is past. I have sailed into this cave on several occasions and had the kids take the launch deep into the sea lion rookery some 1,200 feet under the island. As you penetrate this watery dungeon in the darkness it undertakes an inelastic right turn at the terminus of which your flashlight picks out the sea lions which are bellowing in the dripping cavern like a pride of, well, lions. There is the overpowering smell which is quite breathtaking too. The reflected light illuminates their eyes like those of demons and in an instant they vault from the rocks, rampaging toward the dingy, jaws agape, roaring in the echoing grotto. More than one 10 year old (and a few somewhat more advanced in years) has

seen his life blaze before his eyes when the lions charge. In the chamber they blitzkrieg like so many soggy grizzly bears and bear straight at you—then they pop up around the boat their faces all grinning and innocent as if they didn't just scare the cheese right off your crackers.

Santa Cruz Island is almost completely uninhabited now though it supported an indigenous population for over 10,000 years. When people first settled the islands miniature



mastodons and tiny horses still lived there. An exceptional display of ancient island life can be seen at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History in the hills above the town. It is a small but most excellent museum which punches far above its weight class.

In 1542 Cabrillo fell from his horse during his exploration of the coast, (he got as far north as today's Oregon California border) and died on San Miguel Island. He was the first to put the California coast on a map even if with great inaccuracies. Mapmakers persisted in drawing California as an island for nearly 200 more years. It was thought to be an island because Queen Calafia lived on an island.

Queen Calafia? For this we have to go back. Waaaay back.

The discovery of California was inevitable but the motivation for the expedition that gave it its name can be laid at the door of Herodotus of Halicarnassus (5th century BC) in Greece. Herodotus is called 'the father of history' and is actually the first historian because his is the earliest recitation of historical events.

Of course 'histories' are what historians *say* happened. The events that actually happened are called, 'the things that actually happened.' This distinction is important because like everyone, historians are fallible, the ancient record is flawed and readers have to draw their own conclusions. So don't be too hard on the historian because he has made an effort to bring you a gift. Most histories at least aim toward the truth even if they don't always hit the mark. As Strabo, another Greek, said, "When facts are short make the pen long," so Herodotus and the rest of those scribblers felt compelled to make things up when they were unable to verify the facts.

It is in this fashion that the Greeks conjured up their mytho-historical view of the world. The important figures in pre history were real people who morphed into gods because of sloppy record keeping. These gods were real enough to the Greeks as were their exploits. Today we see their gods as quaint fables—in no way reflecting reality, even if there are houses of worship in practically every town in America today where much more modern gods are worshipped.

One of the Greek myths Herodotus recounted was the story of the Amazons. They were a tribe of women who lived on an island somewhere around the



Santa Cruz Island was the go to location for mermaid movies in the 1920s



Looks like they've been hanging out at Muscle Beach



Black Sea in today's Bulgaria. They were giant black women who hunted and fought with spears and arrows fashioned of solid gold (not the best material for this but still pretty stylish). They were rich in the capital of the day—gems and pearls. Men did stud duty and were then disposed of. Yikes! To the Greeks the gods more less existed but they knew the stories themselves were soap operas and weren't taken literally. Rather these were cautionary parables that were effective in shaping a society.

I'd rather take my chances with the Salinas Police Dept.

After the fall of Ancient Greece and the Western Roman Empire these myths were preserved in Constantinople by the Eastern Roman Empire. In the Middle Ages scholars were aware of the stories and educated people studied the legends. The persistence of the story of the Amazons proved durable because it's about sex and money and holds the possibility that these big, mean women might be subdued should they ever be located. Now wait a minute, you're thinking, surely they didn't really have a fan club? They did.

A note on the preservation of the history of the ancients: Have you ever wondered how much of the actual written record we have from the Ancient Greeks. We have exactly nothing. There are no written copies from the age itself. In fact Plato didn't even respect writing as he said 'writing was inflexible' (or historians said he said that). He felt that his students should memorize his words and he had a lot to say. And what do we have from the Romans? We have part of an incinerated library of scrolls from the foot of Vesuvius at Herculaneum which after its discovery 250 years ago has still not been unrolled. All the rest of the words from ancient times are carved on stone or are copies of copies of copies...

Where was I? Oh yes, Herodotus. Columbus mentioned in his journal that he thought he spotted the Amazons in the Caribbean on his second voyage in 1493. Later explorers were pretty sure they saw them living along a really big river in Brazil, hence the name.

Then in 1510 Garcia Rodriguez de Montalvo wrote the Spanish bestseller *Sergas de Esplandián* (*Exploits of Esplandián*) in which he told the story of Esplandián, an explorer who went in search of these singular women.

From his book:

"Now I want ye to know something so wondrous that nothing like it could be found in writing or in anyone's memory. Know that to the right of the Indies there was an island very close to the coast of Earthly Paradise, which was populated by black women without a single man among them. They had beautiful and robust bodies, striving and ardent hearts, and were very strong.

The most secure and impregnable rocks protected the island itself and peaks as could be found in the world. Their weapons were solid gold, as were the bridles of the wild beasts that they tamed and rode. No other metal existed on the island. They lived in well appointed caves. They had many ships in which they sailed to other lands on expeditions, and all the men whom they captured they took with them and killed, as ye shall hear further on. In some places they were at peace with

their enemies, and they mixed with them in complete safety and had carnal knowledge, from which many were left pregnant, and if they gave birth to a female, they kept her, but if a male, they immediately killed him. The reason for that, as far as it is known, was because they firmly believed that if they reduced the men to a small number, they could reign over all their lands without effort, so they kept only enough to be able to ensure the propagation of their people.

On this island there were many griffons, who lived in the arid lands in huge flocks, the like of which could not be found anywhere else on Earth. When the griffins gave birth, the women came, wearing thick leather to protect them, and took the young. They brought them to their caves and raised them.

When the young griffins were ready, they fed them the men they had captured and the boys they had borne, with such frequency and skill that the griffins would not harm the women. Any man who entered the island was immediately killed and eaten

by the beasts, which, if they were not hungry, would still grab them and fly through the air, and when they were tired of carrying them, would let them fall, so that they were killed..."

The book goes on in ever-greater detail about feeding men to the birds, to the dogs and chucking them over cliffs—it was surely written by someone with father issues.

The story has endured for 2,500 years but it was in the 16th century that things took an interesting turn. In the mind of the reader (the reader in the middle of the last millennium) there seemed to be a possibility that these women might leap off the pages of a novel and be quite tangible. Back then the border between the real and the mythological was easily crossed. This was an age of sensational upheaval—where the earth was being kicked from the center of universe, strange people materialized in a new world and science began to wrestle with magic for preeminence.

Around this time Ponce de Leon went to Florida to search for the fountain of youth. Isn't it a teeny bit ironic that Florida should now be populated by a race of shuffleboard playing antiques—known as Pensioners—who are the least youthful in all of the New World?

Then Coronado went off in search of the 7 Cities of Gold in New Mexico and Colorado (always the gold). The first Spanish explorers arrived at what is now Baja California in 1533 with the specific mandate to find the Amazon tribe. Indians had told Francisco Cortés (Hernán's cousin) they were 'over there' (somewhat vague) and in an 1524 report by Cortés to Emperor Charles V he used language lifted directly from *Sergas de Esplandián* to justify his expedition. The Spanish were actually searching for these ladies from Greek mythology.

The first expedition was a bust but then Hernán Cortés, the conqueror of the Aztecs, led a second expedition north along the west coast of Mexico a few years after Francisco's—hoping for another big score like he had in Mexico City. All he found was a scabby shore bounded by desiccated wasteland, and condors, which, while big, weren't griffins. And—no gold—no black Amazon warriors. They did find several squat brown women and 7 tiny misshapen pearls. Hey, close enough. After all it was a government job and everyone's backside was more or less covered. The explorers were disappointed, sure, but they declared it the Island of California anyway, after



Spelled - Gryphon, Griffon and Griphon

the Amazon Queen—Califia. Of course it wasn't an island either though the notion persisted until the late 1600s when the King of Spain decreed it to be a peninsula. (When I'm king I shall declare it an island once more and change the Arlington Springs Woman back into a man again).

I love it that the exploration and eventual subjugation of the New World took place because some adventures couldn't tell truth from fiction. Columbus was actually looking for India and called the locals—Indians. This is the best seemingly made up story in history but it happens to be true. Perhaps if he had landed further north he would have called the locals Chinese and today we would call the natives American Chinese.

GAVIOTA PASS

Today Gaviota is just a rest area where people stop to drain the kids. But there has been a lot of drama at this particular stretch. Gaspar Portola on his exploratory trip to discover the San Francisco Bay traversed the pass and named it for a fallen seagull they passed on the trail. Clearly Gaspar was running short of place names at this point.

The great great grandfather of my mother's second husband, Mad Wally was alleged to have dramatically saved Col. Fremont's life in the mid 19th century. This is almost certainly not true as was most of what Benjamin Foxen claimed. Col. John C. Fremont was sent to California in the 1840s while it was under Mexican rule to kick the tires of this potential state. The Mexicans thought that this was dirty pool as they had just snatched it from Spain as the Spaniards had from the Indians.



The Pass at dusk

Anyway, here was this tasty piece of real estate—California—and Col. John roved around totting up its many virtues. The Mexicans decided that they should cool this fellow down with a little lead poisoning and they planned to waylay him as he came through Santa Barbara. The Mexican in charge was a bit unsure how much juice this Fremont guy really had so they adopted the tried and true American gimmick of blaming the Indians. So they paid some heathens to stage an ambush at Gaviota. Here the story gets a wee bit muddy.

Benjamin Foxen was an American sea captain who married a Spanish woman from a classy family and as a result the King of Spain had gifted him with much of the pastures of plenty around Santa Barbara. He was the hefe, the honcho, the Big Man on Campus. Supposedly Ben sniffed peril on the wind and courageously intervened leading the Colonel and his troops over San Marcos Pass to the south thereby saving his life and allowing John C. to send the news that this was one fine neighborhood, perfect to become the cornerstone of our manifest desires to make the country fit nicely on a map.

Years later it was discovered that Fremont knew about the ambush. In fact everyone guffawed

at the idea of Indians having any agency over the troops. John went on to run unsuccessfully for President so it wouldn't have mattered much anyway. Still, he did look fetching in his uniform.

So what do we have? A distant relative of mine by a short duration marriage didn't save the life of a guy who didn't become president... moving on.

Manfred Ott had come with me on my voyage back to Isla Vista. It's fair to say that we might have partaken of a smidgen of the psychedelics so in vogue at the time. Our trip, and I mean that in so many ways, was eventless...at the outset. Sure the sky was a deepening green and the other cars looked like spaceships filled with frosted donuts wearing sunglasses at times—it was 1969 after all. The donut-drivers stared back at us and were probably equally as stoned. Long about Atascadero we drew up behind a biggish double trailer long hauler. As he rounded a curve I saw him slew to the side and his trailers positively levitated off the greasy concrete in a classic time-freezing jackknife. I tap-tap-tapped on my eyeballs to clear them but what with these huge metal ingots levitating—then skittering in spinning arcs all about the freeway (one ingot taking time to punch a hole in the truck's fuel tank) it became quite exciting and was actually happening in real life (a novel change). There was no one else in the immediate vicinity—just Manfred Ott, myself and the bug-eyed motorman—our little troupe steering for the verge dodging the murderous ingots bounding along furrowing the pavement. At the margin of the highway the disconsolated driver leaped from his truck and commenced to jitterbugging with wild abandon—like a honey bee communicating a distant forest of sunflowers to her sisters. Manfred Ott and I hove to as well and exiting the Morris we joined the pilot of the truck in a synchronous backstep as at a tidal bore of yellow gasoline sluiced across the pavement.

Just at the cinematic point when the whole rig should detonate, it didn't, but still it was an astounding pageant and I was glad to have played a part in it. Oh Manfred, your eyes were bulging so that I feared they would come untethered from their sockets. But after we got the driver to slow his berserking, Manfred and I resolved to navigate to a nearby highway patrol office and tell the tale. Now if you have never been in a police station on acid in the late 60s with long hair, peace signs and love beads I can say you have missed one of life's all time bad trips.

At the station we calmly and succinctly unspooled a clear reconstruction of the events lacking only charts and graphs. At least this is what it felt like. What it looked like to them was that a pair of spiraled-eyed lunatics from the planet Freak had just overstepped the sill of this the holy shrine of short hair and aftershave (with guns and clubs) and jibbled in an unknown dialect of garbelish.

Somehow the impending calamity of a 10 foot hole being blown in the freeway with, as I endeavored to explain, terrific specimens of full-bodied hardware being launched a half a mile in the air was more compelling to the HP than harassing a pair of hippies so, backing out the door, we left the situation in their hands. Manfred was quite distraught, more by his having seen a real live cop in front of him than the truck crash so we did, what hippies often did, when under duress. We dropped more acid. Merrily, we were on way once again. Things became somewhat confused for a time—the pavement now boiling like a lava lake then freezing like a Polar sea the next instant. I think we picked up a two-headed hitchhiker and at some point we seemed to have stopped to capture some burritos but they kept sprouting centipede legs, each foot shod in tiny shoes which they wiggled about as they scurried off. We couldn't catch them and anyway, who eats centipedes?

It was growing dark (or we were actually, finally, going blind this time) as we came out of the Gaviota Tunnel and hit a wall of dense fog. Not in itself a big problem except for the smoking train wreck spread out between the road and the ocean. I drove gingerly past the jackknifed train

cars (what was *with* all this jackknifing today?) as Manfred tried to focus. We conjured up cranes and fire trucks and it looked for all the world like a carnival had exploded. “Oh man, I thought,



I muuuust cuut baack oon thiis stuuuff (LSD has a definite lengthening effect).” The image vaporized in an instant and, because it was just one more nightmare, I forgot about it... until the next day after we got to Isla Vista.

We had compared notes on the truck crash so I knew I was on solid ground on that one but we hadn’t discussed the tragic carnival cruise. I said tentatively, “Manfred, that was a pretty terrific train wreck yesterday too.”

Manfred said “I know what you mean, man, I think I saw a dragon or an extremely large dog guarding it. I had not seen the dragon but thought it odd that we had both imagined the train wreck. A few days later I was

“Keep moving people, nothing to see here.”

driving back north, this time with sound mind, relatively, and there was a train wreck all right. But alas, no dragon.

An interesting aspect of truck, train and airship wrecks is their suddenness and unpredictability as happened on one occasion when I was traversing the Gaviota Pass at dusk in the spring of 2012. I was aboard the Eureka with the owner, my 3 sons and trio of pilots. It was a training cruise and the most senior Zeppelin pilot in the world was overseeing the other two. We slipped through the pass easily enough but as the ship approached the ocean we hit a severe updraft which jerked our ship’s nose impetuously toward the vertical. We were firmly in the grip of this piece of wind and were skyrocketing heavenward at an acute angle. Multiple alarms started shrieking along with at least two of the passengers. One of the trainees later reported seeing vague angels holding harps in the clouds.

We were all put in mind of the crash of the Macon in a similar circumstance in 1933 a few miles north. The Macon was one of 4 American dirigibles. Two had crashed already and on the evening of April 4th the Macon had a maneuvering problem which caused it to slap the ocean surface and subsequently part of its tail snapped off. This resulted in so much weight loss that the ship began to climb, like us, at an alarming (literally) rate. At 4,000 feet the crew was compelled to vent hydrogen or the ballonets would explode. They knew on the way up that the sky *was* the actual limit and they would soon be leaving it—so reversing their trajectory they headed for the drink.

The Macon’s sister ship the Akron had similarly dropped from sky to sea with only two survivors but that was on a dark and stormy night. Admiral William Moffett was the commander of the Macon hence the name of the airfield in Sunnyvale.



Shot this pic as we spun out of control

But the Macon settled tenderly on the sea and life rafts were deployed. Still, two crew members drowned in the confusion. On our ship we had no life rafts but we were only about a half mile from land. The thought of a hard landing with a 246' - ¾" ship above, with you in an eggshell of a gondola, gives a person pause. Some of us aboard were sailors and wind didn't worry us. And anyway, crash landing in a Zeppelin would be great for my image. But I knew that our powerful engines and our experienced pilot would thwart this excellent potential for instant celebrity and I was right. Still it was a tad harrowing. Perhaps I'll go by semi truck or the train next time.

POINT CONCEPTION

Much of the terrain in this region looks more like Old California than other parts of the state, except for the Vandenberg Air Force Base (the ranchos never got around to installing ICBMs). This is where a great many missile launches take place including some by SpaceX. The neighborhood is regularly alight with the fiery rockets hauling us into the future.

The ancient Chumash thought of the Point Conception area as the portal through which the souls of the dead could pass between the mortal world and the heavenly paradise of *Similaqsa*. This was certainly true for 23 sailors the night of Sept 8th in 1923.

Flying over Honda Point outside of Lompoc we could still see the wreckage of the grandest peacetime naval disaster in U.S. history. 11 new Clemson Class destroyers under radio silence were in follow-the-leader formation. Radar had yet to be invented and in the heavy fog they were navigating by dead reckoning. This is a most unfortunate term considering what happened next. Dead reckoning is a method of calculating your speed with your compass heading and then guessing where you are. The Navy no longer practices the follow-the-leader formation because on this night one after another the ships hit the rocks at Point Honda. 1, 2, 3... in the end 9 slamming into the rocks and only two were able to be pulled free.

The other big event on the coast occurred earlier in the same year. Cecil B. Demille built Pharaoh's city of Thebes on the dramatic sand dunes at Nipomo Beach just a couple of miles up the coast from Pt. Honda. It was the largest movie set ever built. Cecil B. constructed 110 foot tall walls, sphinxes and a pretty darn good ancient Egypt for his spectacle, *The Ten Commandments*.

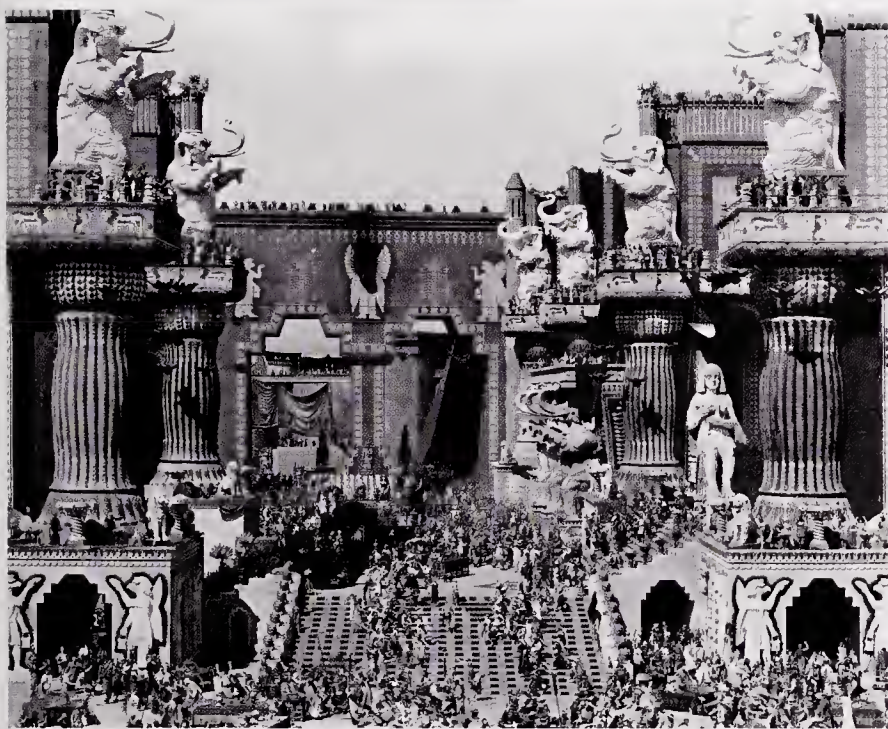
1,600 people toiled all summer on the beach and from contemporary accounts it was sort of like actual ancient Egypt parties with Hollywood in the Roaring 20s. Whoopee!

When you look up Cecil B's *Ten Commandments* it's confusing because there are two films with the same name by the same director. These movies are essentially bookends to his career. He made the first film in '23 and the other one in '56. The earlier one does indeed

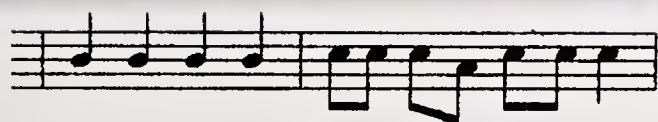


"Koff, koff, koff"





"Oh it's nothing fancy but we call it home"



A, B, C, D, can I bring a friend to tea?

The theatrics of religion pop up all the time demonstrating that God can have a dark sense of humor. (Note on capitalizing the g in God: I do this or don't with some precision so don't go all Ivy-League-English-majority on me.) Anyway, in 2014 some poor sucker was being baptized in the surf right in front of the ruins of the fake pagan temple from the 1923 movie at the Guadalupe Dunes. The overzealous padre miscalculated the undertow and the congregant was lost at sea. His carcass was never found (we know where his soul is though). I've checked and have discovered several similar instances of being drowned during baptism thus having the effect of being saved and lost simultaneously.

* Around 2013 or so the grosses started breaking all the old records and besides who cares about 6th place? I'm sorry I mentioned it.

depict the resplendent city of Thebes but only for a few minutes. Ancient Egypt soon transubstantiates to the present day (1920s) San Francisco and the story contorts into a morality parable about an unscrupulous contractor who builds a church out of cheap concrete and the whole pile falls down and flattens his mother. Oh boo-dern-hoo!

The second film with Charlton Heston is much better and includes the parting of the Red Sea, stupendous beards, slaves being smushed into paste under the architectural details and one damn fine orgy. Today, the movie could be shown to first graders without a blink but back then it was some pretty fast stuff. But because it was a big don't-do-the-following story from the Old Testament it was widely exhibited.

After the film wrapped they bulldozed the set and the affair was forgotten—at least until some enterprising archeology students proceeded to dig the faux city up in the 1980s as an archaeological exercise even if of limited historical value compared to the real Egypt.

The 1956 version was the most expensive film made to date and is the 6th top earner of all time.* It was 3 hours 40 minutes long making it the 7th longest regular release film. Lots of movies have been made from stories in the Bible. Hollywood loves these stories and not a little because the author's copyright has long expired. They just don't make em like this anymore... thank god.



"Says here— made in America."

The War With Mexico

Many cities, towns, mountains, rivers, bays, nooks and wrinkles in California have place names in Spanish. Spain and then Mexico were the landlords for a time. The way California came to be part of America is generally remembered as a land grab by feisty Americanos who couldn't keep their manifest destiny in their pants. This is true and the story of how this came to pass has a certain charm even if tinted with just a soupçon of blood.



Emperor Whiskers and his pet epaulets Hapsburg (remembered now principally for the sticky-outy lip in Spain which is said have caused the Spanish lisp that the courtiers picked up so as not to be out of lip-sync with King Alphonso XIII) and will be remembered principally for the spectacular whiskering about his imperial visage and for the way he ended so badly. Emperor Ferdinand was a hired royal who concluded his reign on the bullety side of a firing squad when the Mexicans realized that they could do just as good a job ruining their country as some Austrian guy.

After one protracted war with Spain the Mexicans tossed the Europeans from their shores and embraced liberty, fraternity, equality—for 4 days then voted themselves in a king. Wait a minute—you can vote for a dictator? Sure, this happens. In Mexico there was never the strong movement we had in the north for a rough sort of equality unevenly applied as it may have been.

It takes some serious mental acrobatics to keep the wars in Mexico straight. The Mexican War of Independence, 1810 to 1821, has to be distinguished from the Mexican Revolution of 1910. The Mexican American War 1846 is separate...sort of from the Bear Flag Revolt of '46. In Mexico there have been countless palace coups, foreign invasions and at least once where the government just upped and quit leaving no one at all in charge to further bedevil the issue. The country of Mexico was much bigger than the United States in the 1840s and reached from Oregon to Texas and on south to Central America.

Mexico has had a pretty bizarre run over the last couple of centuries. One peculiar twist was when the French annexed the place and installed Emperor Ferdinand Maximilian 1 (there was no 2, but who's counting?). And Ferdinand wasn't even French he was Austrian. Spain and France teamed up to invade in 1864 because they hadn't been paid reparations from a previous war in 1828. Emperor Whiskers (as he was known) was a



"Oh crap! Powder burns are such hell to get out."

The Mexican government looked like it was playing a game of political foosball with the liberals and the conservatives bouncing the peasants all about to the ruination of both the economy and the country's reputation. The Mexican Revolution went on a long time. The Spanish didn't want to capitulate because they had been extracting gold and silver for hundreds of years and this was the real reason for the 19th century reinvasions. With the Spanish it was all about the money. They believed the joint was one big hard rock mine and if a few (million) died in the

mines so King Whoever could live in a house with gold spittoons that would be just fine. The Spanish reconquest was unsuccessful but Mexico was soon spiraling out of control. In 1846 alone, the presidency changed hands 4 times, the war ministry 6 times, and the finance ministry 16 times.

The Mexicans found it impossible to administrate such a big country so the U.S. born Texicans decided to help Mexico by carving off Texas from Mexico to save them all that paperwork. Americans were pouring into the region and this created a bit of ill ease in Old Mexico. Mexico would have sent troops and settlers but they had so few people thus the Texicans became Texans and started acting like they owned the place.

The Mexican headman, Antonio López de Santa Anna, who was at once the President, top military man and defacto dictator became irate when a Texas upstart named Haden Edward declared that the lands of Texas were independent. Thus was born The Republic of Texas...actually, not yet. He named it Freedonia. Now I thought the Marx Brothers made that place up in their movie *Duck Soup*



"I feel pretty..."

but in fact there really was a short-lived revolt under this name in 1827. Name or no, it had the effect of finally attracting the attention of the Mexican honchos.

There was a lot of backing and forthing before Santa Anna (he is always called by his whole last name otherwise we have to call him Anna and that would not do) went after Davy Crocket and the 180 defenders of the Alamo in 1836. As all of us red-blooded 'Mrican's know, the Alamo conquerors were a bunch of grouchy Mexicans trying to snatch back the land we had taken fair and square from them minutes earlier. Tony Santa Anna was one tough hombre and not only did he kill the defenders of the Alamo but a few days later captured over 300 Texans then executed them all while in custody. Having combatants surrender and then shooting them has the same effect as putting a cherry bomb in a toddler's birthday cake. It definitely ruins the party and you are not asked back.

The story from here has so many convolutions it starts to look like brain coral. Tony continued tarnishing his image over the next few years vacuuming the pesos out of the Mexican treasury and developing a savage gambling habit which cost him millions in today's money. His sport was cock fighting. Strange dynamic, he was the man in charge and still he loses?

Tony built lavish haciendas and at one point had a personal staff of over 5,000. He proved to



"Hail, hail, Freedonia!"

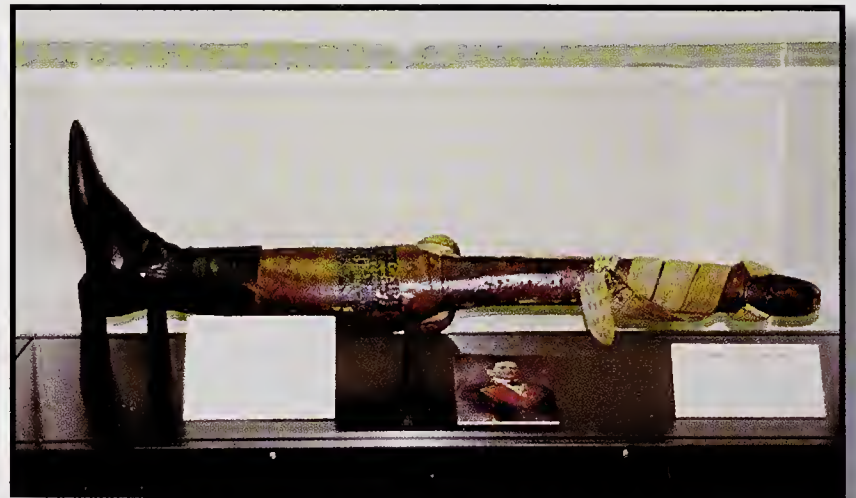
be exceptionally resilient for such a loco general and was deposed on no less than *three* occasions. He had timeouts on the beach in Cuba and later Colombia. In the 1870s President General Antonio López de Santa Anna, dictator-for-life, Most Serene Highness, The Napoleon of the West, the 3 time head man of Mexico was living on Staten Island, trying to launch a chewing gum company based on a rubbery substance



The Mexican/American War was mostly known for terrific hats from Mexico called chicle. This eventually worked out but by then he had sold the process. The chewing company was called Chiclets. (Next to large dogs sitting expectancy behind the steering wheels of cars in parking lots is the funniest thing in my life.)

At one point early in his career this feisty general was badly wounded when his leg was shot clean off. This proved to be a savvy political move resulting in a live general but a very dead leg. Hummm...how to spin this? Hold a state funeral for his leg of course. A sort of mini-martyr. Tony had his leg dolled up in a petite uniform and it became the centerpiece of a huge celebration. The shriveled appendage was transported by funeral coach with a massive honor guard and marching band as it was paraded the 200 miles from Vera Cruz to Mexico City where it was received by the cheering masses before being interred in a lavish tomb. Then he strapped on another wooden leg took over as headman once again discarding any pretense of helping the country.

In 1847 Tony's artificial leg was captured by soldiers of the 4th Illinois Infantry. Tony had been eating lunch during the battle when soldiers came upon the general's abandoned carriage and discovered the leg, \$18,000 in gold (which they turned in) and a roast chicken lunch (which they ate). The leg is on display in Illinois in a diorama featuring it along with a pile of fake gold and a rubber chicken.



Some Texans today are being unpleasant as they angle for possession of the leg to display at the San Yacinto Museum. Certain enthusiastic citizens of Texas with the blessing of Governor Rick Perry actually petitioned Congress in 2013 to force Illinois to give up the leg even if they had no legal (make up a 3 letter word here) _ _ _ to stand on.

Those damn Texans are all gimme gimme gimme

After Tony lost his second leg he had another made and this was eventually captured, also by Illinois' 4th. This leg was used by Lieutenant Abner Doubleday as a baseball bat during an improvised game in Mexico. Abner is credited as having invented the very game of baseball a few years earlier. This leg is on display at the Illinois Governor's Mansion. The baseball museum in Cooperstown, N.Y. has tried to get that one but not by passing a federal law like the Texans. The



Leg 2

they were really destined to be part of the United States. However, it began to emerge even in the 1840s, nearly two decades before the U.S. Civil War, that the northern states were reluctant to let the Texans come into the Union as it would be an additional slave state upsetting the balance. This led to years of artful politicking by the Texans trying to prove that slaves were actually indentured servants. When this failed they tried claiming that slaves preferred slavery anyway. They also attempted to convince members of Congress that Texas was so big that they would drain the slaves from the rest of the south making those states nearly free. It's this sort of nonsense that causes folks to poke fun at Texans.

Mexico had real problems with the idea of slavery in the mid 19th century. Technically the Mexican government didn't endorse slavery. The leaders of the country professed to be appalled by the very notion that people should not be free but drew a line in the sand when it came to letting them vote, own land or have any rights at all. In fact the poorest peasants and Indians in Old Mexico were treated far worse than slaves in the U.S. In 1860 a male slave sold for about

a \$1,500 in the U.S. but in Mexico the working class folks were mostly Indians who had the unpleasant habit of lying down on the job and dying so they were worth about 5 dollars. A used saddle cost \$10.

As push came to push really hard, the Texans shoved the Mexican government out and the U.S. sided with these Lone Star scallywags. But the U.S. offered to help the Mexicans out by buying California, Utah, Nevada, New Mexico and Texas for \$30 million. Mexico said no gracias and war was declared.

In 1776 Mexico had a much larger economy than the U.S. but by 1820 it had half. By 1846 Mexico had dropped to one



Sooo many legs



Thank god for Texas

citizen's of Illinois have so far been disinclined to give up either leg.

Yet another one of his wooden legs is on display at the national museum in Mexico City. Manufacture of Tony's artificial legs was something of a growth industry for a time. No doubt more are yet to wander on in.

Moving back a bit. It was 1841 and the Texans and the Mexicans were hard at it. The Texans attempted a confabulation with insurgents in the Yucatan who were valiantly striving to secede from Mexico. In the Yucatan the Mayan population was in open revolt. The regionalism in Mexico was extreme as Indian factions all over Mexico felt no allegiance to the government or to the 300 years of Spanish domination. The Spanish language wasn't even spoken in many parts of Mexico. This factionalism is still going on today.

Meanwhile the Texans believed their own press about how big their britches were and attempted to seize part of Kansas in addition to separating from Mexico with their Republic of Texas. But the Texans were only half-heartedly trying to establish their own country. They knew that

tenth. Essentially bankrupt when the Mexican American War started, the Mexicans assembled an army of Indians, convicts and street people. It became a numbers game. 100 armed soldiers were requisitioned to an outpost and 100 were delivered. Once when General Castro (he was the commander in California during the war) ordered additional troops, the soldiers arrived with only one antiquated gun for every 10 men. They lacked shoes and some were wrapped in blankets due to a shortage of pants. The gringos were forced to feed their own enemy before they shot at them. Some of the regiments were professional soldiers but the war was lost before it started and both sides knew that Mexico was going to get creamed.

Despite the objections of the abolitionists who knew that defacto slavery was endemic in Mexico, the war received enthusiastic support in the United States and was fought almost entirely by volunteers. The waves of American army soldiers dispatched to Mexico City swelled to over 115,000 in a few weeks. Of this total approximately 1.5 percent were killed in the fighting and nearly 10 percent died of injuries, cholera, yellow fever and malaria. Another 12 percent were wounded or discharged because of disease or both. For years afterward the Mexican War veterans continued to suffer from the debilitating diseases contracted during the campaigns. The casualty rate was thus easily over 25 percent for the 17 months of the war; the total casualties may have reached 35–40 percent if later injury and disease related deaths are added. In this respect the war was the bloodiest in American military history — and we were the winners.

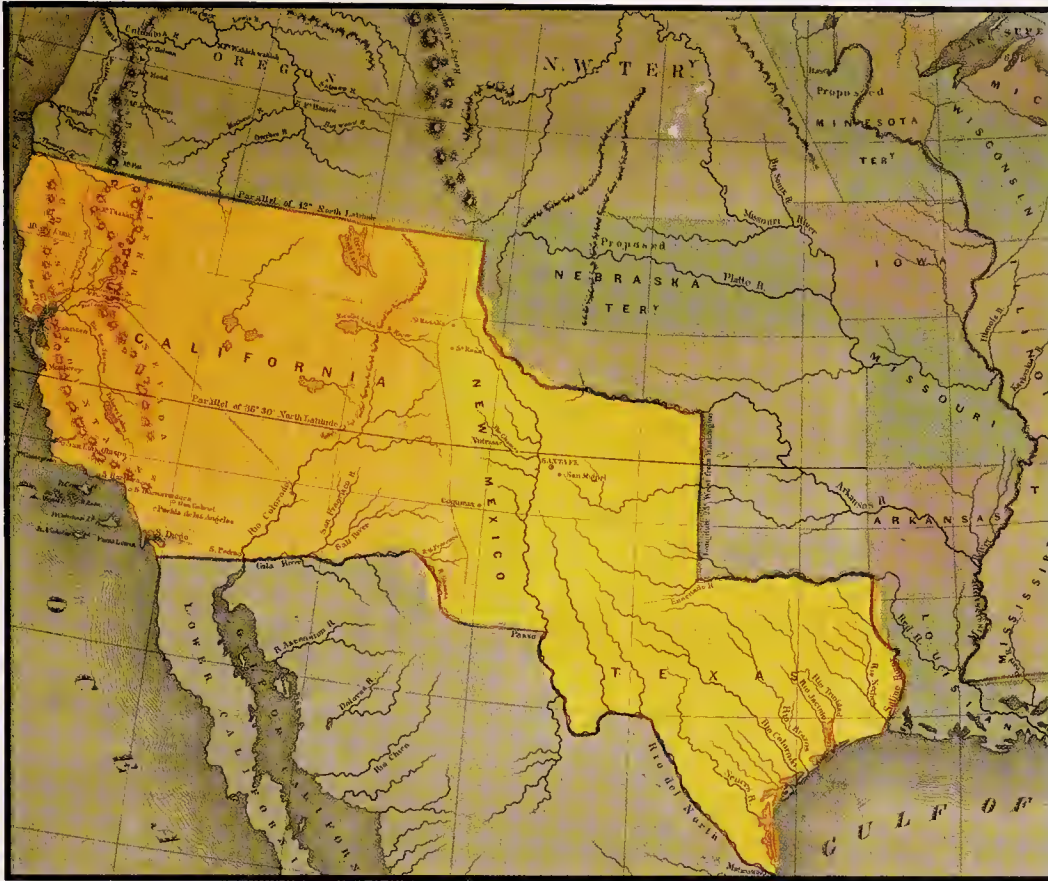
Tony Santa Anna's men fared even worse. On one occasion he marched his troops 240 miles and 5,000 of them died of starvation and thirst. The Mayans in the Yucatan, now in open revolt, saw their numbers cut in half.

We sent a remarkably well trained caboodle of leaders to pound some sense into the Mexicans. The U.S. had Winfield Scott leading the charge with Robert E. Lee, George Meade, Ulysses S. Grant, and Stonewall Jackson. Quite the lineup. You know these names from the squabble we had in the 1860s. The Civil War was literally fought between battle-hardened college roommates from West Point.

In Mexico the citizens suffered from corrupt government, grotesque marginalization and near universal illiteracy. The Mexican government was unpersuaded that they should hand over half their country and the two countries more or less stumbled into war. Our ambassador Joel Poinsett proved to be useless but did manage to have a flower named after him. We told the Mexicans we were doing them a favor as we invaded the Halls of Montezuma and when we arrived we considered keeping the whole enchilada.

In Mexico the Spanish had set a Medieval tone with an ironclad class system. The Spanish Crown was not keen to improve the New World and in concert with the Catholic Church kept the lower classes of their conquered lands in perpetual penury. Unlike folks in the U.S., the vast majority in Mexico were peasants living short, miserable lives. Am I slamming Mexico? Remember this was a long time ago and these folks have returned to the dust. The 19th century had some serious flaws in every country (come to think of it so do all countries in every century).

If we had kept all of Mexico the United States would look very different. If Mexico had come into the Union without slavery the South might have been so overwhelmed as to not have opted for war in 1860. The people in Mexico would be way better off and our food in the north would be much tastier. By the time the Mexican American War ended in late 1847, war aims had shifted and some Americans, particularly those in the Northeast, favored the 'All Mexico' proposal that would have seen Mexico absorbed into the United States, much like Texas had been and



“Gee, thanks for this. Oh, and could you throw in Baja?”

and wanted freedom and liberty. Americans were all about improving the land, building infrastructure and making things. England supported this notion and after the split in ‘76 we quickly became friends and even the short war in 1812 was just a couple of cousins having a fistfight; it was soon over and everyone went back to making money. Religious freedom was important in the U.S. and we had a sense that you could become anything you wanted to be. Of course if you were African, Hispanic, Indian or later Asian, Irish or a woman, gay or handicapped you were sidelined but a few lucky American’s were full citizens. Just like in ancient Greece (except there you *could* be gay).

We in America have a past that makes us justifiably cringe. Our historic treatment of the red man consternates us today as does making a tired woman go to the back of the bus. I remember when McDonald’s wouldn’t ever hire women (McDonald’s claimed they didn’t want the boyfriends hanging out in the stores) much less Hispanic women. Time marches on and we learn.

Some folks believe that we should feel guilty or even deep shame for these acts. The course of human events is paved with the bones of the weak and disenfranchised. It’s the oldest story in history to march over into your neighbor’s yard, pillage, burn and name what’s left after yourself. But we have no control over the past. If I spend one percent of my angst, guilt or compassion on events truly beyond my control I’d have less capacity to pay attention to my actions and my influence on my children and community. Don’t blame me. I didn’t burn the Library at Alexandria.

There were really two wars between the U.S. and Mexico, or at least two unconnected fronts. The war in California was a pathetic series of small skirmishes with few fatalities. The American settlers in California had revolted against Mexican rule and in June of 1846 established the Bear Flag Republic, under Col. John C. Fremont before news of the actual war reached them.

John C.’s 45 mountain men stormed into General Vallejo’s house in Sonoma in the middle of the night and took him hostage in his bedclothes. He offered them strong drink. Not the best move perhaps—to liquor up your captors but Vallejo was Californian born and bred and he supported

California soon would be. Bringing Mexico into the Union would have lifted the Mexican people up from their severe deprivation and spared them one tyrannical government after another.

We didn’t keep their heartland because the Americans and the Mexicans were and are very different people in several key respects. First—we speak different languages. But the differences are more fundamental. The settlers in the U.S. were overwhelmingly British

independence and annexation. The plan was to declare a republic but really to hold the joint for incorporation into the USA. Fremont was on thin ice for a short time as he had started a war in anticipation of the U.S. government actually declaring one and for a time he skated back and forth hoping he hadn't jumped the gun. This act is where that expression comes from. Three weeks later Washington cooperated up and California was made a U.S. territory.

William Todd, nephew of Mary Todd Lincoln, designed a flag for the Bear Flag Revolt and with a rag wrapped around a rusty nail, using blackberry juice, he painted a grizzly bear and a red star on white cloth. The lower red border was said to come from the flannel petticoat of Nancy Kelsey, who stitched the flag. The red star is some sort of homage to the Lone Star Republic of Texas. When the banner was hoisted everyone laughed and yelled Cheche! Cheche Republic! (Spanish for pig) The flag burned in the San Francisco fire of 1906. It looked every bit like a pig.

There were some real battles near LA with dozens of fatalities but as a war zone California got off lightly. An example of this is The Battle of Santa Clara. The Mexicans and the Americans fired back and forth. The Mexicans had rifles dating from the 1700s with an effective range of well, nothing and dern few of them anyway. There is a plaque in a strip mall parking lot memorializing the occasion. It reads in part - *total dead - 0; total wounded - 0; lost, for awhile - 1*. The missing soldier was an American presumed to be a casualty but who showed up after retrieving his ramrod which he had inadvertently shot out of his gun into the bushes. Come on you guys—couldn't someone at least lose a leg.



The flag burned in the 1906 San Francisco fire

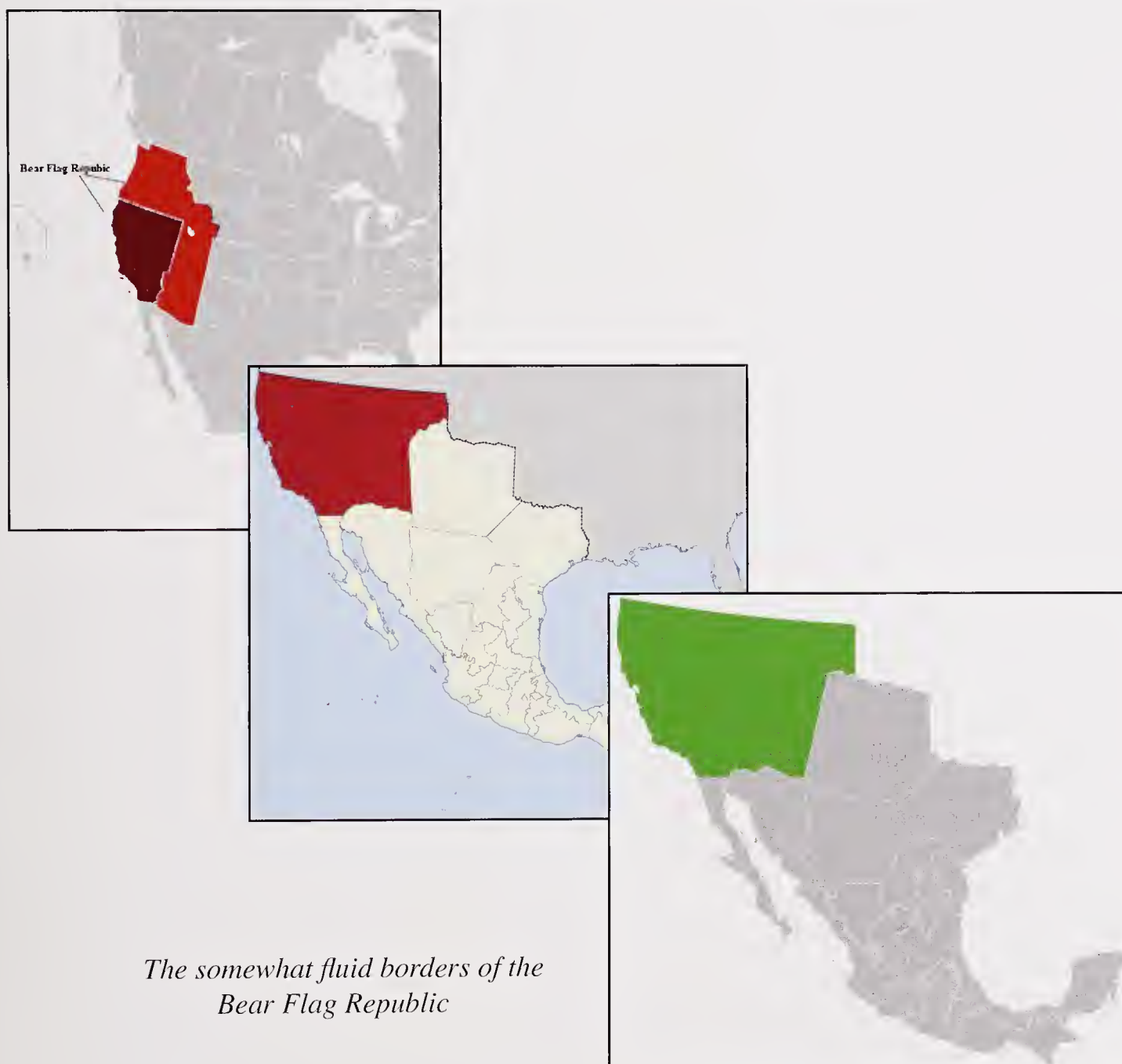
Certainly the U.S. wanted to separate the west from Mexico but a bigger perceived threat was invasion by France or Britain. In fact, soon after the Americans secured the San Francisco Bay Area an English warship sailed through the Golden Gate with the idea of seizing the place. The captain was distraught to discover he had been out maneuvered by a few days. He is said to have ripped his hat from his head and, throwing it to the deck, stomped on it on yelling "Those damn Yankees." Oh well, that'll teach him to stop in Hawaii for lunch.

After the war we did give Mexico 20 million for the land we kept. 6 years after the war Tony Santa Anna needed more pocket money so he sold 30,000 square miles of southern Arizona for 10 million to the U.S. and a few years later Mexico was plunged into war once again.

The Mexican government contemplated a tempting offer from the German government in 1917 that had Germany promising to back Mexico if they would invade the United States to get

back Texas, New Mexico and Arizona (though due to faulty intelligence they forgot California). The Mexicans actually considered this for a few days and concluded that this was not going to work though they sorely wanted it to. The Mexicans were still smarting from a mini-war that took place in 1914 when we seized Vera Cruz (again) in the Tampico Affair and killed over a 100 Mexican soldiers.

It seems the British had intercepted a coded telegram laying out the proposal to Mexico and tipping the German's hand that they were planning to attack American ships using submarines. War between Germany and the U.S. had not been declared and we were at pains to not retaliate or the Kaiser would know his codes had been compromised. After a few days however, we claimed we uncovered what became known as the Zimmerman Telegram in Mexico and we went public with the information. This was a big reason we went to war with Germany.



The somewhat fluid borders of the Bear Flag Republic

DIABLO CANYON

The Diablo Canyon Nuclear Plant is the only nuke in California. It was built despite the protests in 1981 where 1,900 activists were collared in the largest arrest in the history of the U.S. anti nuclear movement.

In the 70s the plant was projected to cost \$300 million. It came in at \$5 billion. The project managers said they were sorry but hey, "What ya gonna do?" Then it was discovered that it was right near an earthquake fault or two or, in fact, three. Then, during upgrades, for the seismic retrofit some fool printed the blueprints backwards and they built the backup cooling system backwards. I'm completely serious. This 'error' cost \$2.2 billion more. A few years later they discovered that the backup cooling system had been disabled for 18 months.

The nuclear industry folks probably mean well and they tout that their enterprise doesn't contribute to the carbon load. So except for the impossible to dispose of radioactive waste, uranium strip mining, terrorist acquisition, earthquake and subsequent tidal wave with attendant meltdown possibilities along with its far greater cost per kilowatt, it's a pretty good system.

We gazed down at the unloved plant and sailed on.



PISMO BEACH

The town fathers and mothers of Pismo Beach like to call their town the Clam Capital of the World. It's famous for the giant clams featured on the menus and raked out of the sand by the millions for many years. The only problem is that these giant clams are



"Ummm, clams"

nearly extinct and the clams they use now are from the East Coast. No matter, the illusion remains. They also let

you drive your car on the beach. This is the only place in California where it is specifically permitted but many people are unfamiliar with the exact beachworthiness of their vehicles in soggy sand so the main employment in town is tow truck driver and oh, clam importer.



"OK let's see, the tow will be \$150 plus dumbass tax of...\$2,850..call it \$3,000."

MORRO BAY



"More throttle George—quick,!"

Morro Bay is recognizable for the giant rock fronting the town at the shore. That's it. Just a big ol rock.

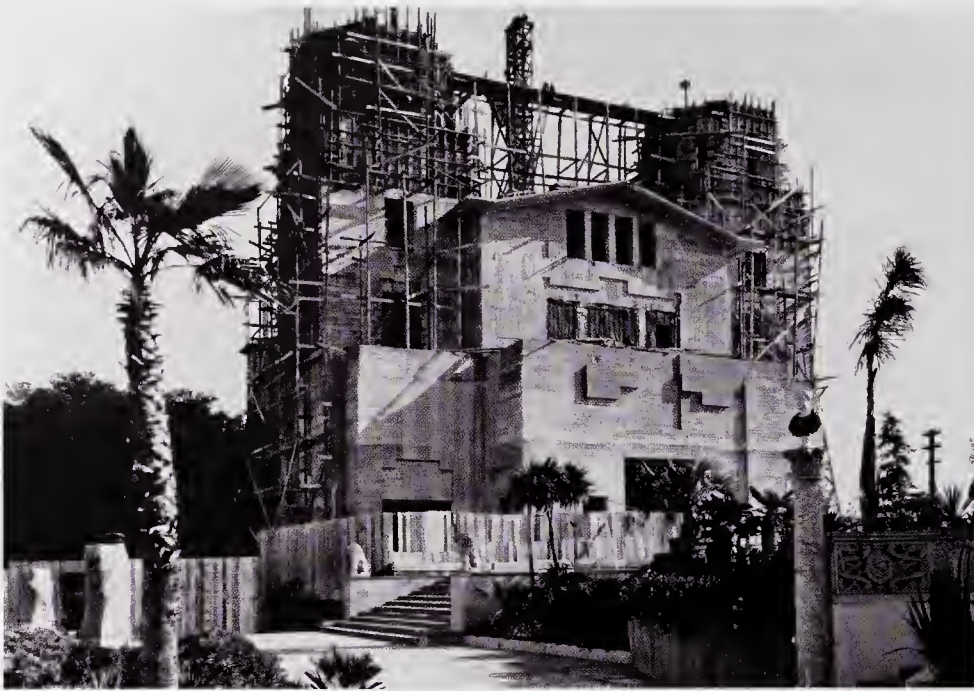
The yacht harbor is known as one of the trickiest on the coast to navigate and is the site of frequent dramatic displays of colorful seamanship. In 1978 actor George C. Scott (against the advice of his skipper) decided to take a 72 foot yacht through the entrance where 20 foot waves were breaking. The boat didn't sink but it sure did try to.

SAN SIMEON

Iluuuvve San Simeon. It is the grandest pile in all of America and is as outrageous and impractical as hummingbird tongue burritos. Critics of the time and even today decry it as the raving in stone of a misguided megalomaniac but I think William Randolph Hearst and his architect



Note our shadow



Julia Morgan were spot on with this light hearted merger of California mission and medieval castle mishmashegoss. It is exactly what I would build if I was the richest man in America and like Randy I would fill it with cool stuff including suits of armor, treasures beyond value, movie stars and glittering royalty.

Hearst was a combination of Donald Trump and Rupert Murdoch with a touch of Evil Kniev-el—but with all the spiky edges sanded down. He took big chances in business and once plummeted

ed from his towering perch only to be bailed out by his gal pal, Marion Davies, who is reported to have hocked her jewelry to save him. By all accounts they were a real couple and she was devoted to him for the decades they were together. I read her autobiography, *The Times We Had*, and I can recommend it. I think she actually wrote it because it has the tone of a funny spoiled school girl and paints a colorful portrait of living large in an age when the 20s roared its loudest.

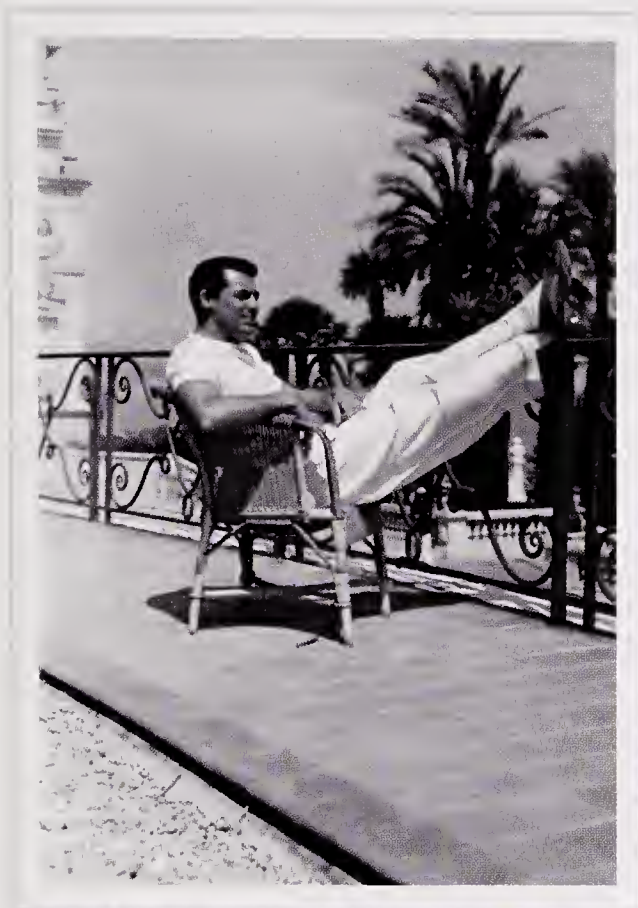
Randy had a wife who was housed in the grandest mansion on Long Island but she conveniently never came west. In the 20s it was scandalous to have two women and this was one reason Hearst couldn't advance in politics. Socially though, folks gave them a pass because the dinner parties were just *tu mahvalous* to miss and after all they were—*show people*.

The Hollywood and political elite often visited, flying to San Simeon's airfield, taking a private Hearst-owned train car from Los Angeles or coming by yacht. Charlie Chaplin, Charles Lindbergh, Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, James Stewart, Bob Hope, Calvin Coolidge, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and other A-listers came to visit. Carol Lombard and Clark Gable spent their wedding night in the Tower Room.

The antics that went on at the castle between the wars were endless. Cary Grant and one of

Hearst's sons once overflowed San Simeon in a small plane and bombed the house with bags of flour. That afternoon Cary found his bags packed outside his door. Harpo Marx used to steal into the main library with Marion when W.R. wasn't around, push aside the furniture and do cartwheels spinning past the cherished Greek urns. George Bernard





Cary Grant at San Simeon

drop our gigantic shadow on them like a 246'- $\frac{3}{4}$ " bag of flour. They screamed like the dickens in wonder whenever we sailed overhead. In fact it is the ideal way to get there and if I owned the castle I would keep our ship happily tethered to the tower for sure.

Shaw remarked to Randy that his castle was, "what heaven would be like if God had your money." Herman J. Mankiewicz, co-writer of *Citizen Kane*, heard the name Rosebud from the actress Louise Brooks at San Simeon: apparently it was Hearst's nickname for a certain part of Marion's anatomy.

Cary Grant was forgiven for his aerial assault and ended up staying 34 times, always in a different bedroom. It was, he said, a terrific place to spend the Great Depression. David Niven always liked to stay in the same bedroom—the one with the hollow-framed bed in which he could hide his liquor.

In an airship it is possible to sneak up on the tourists as they ramble across the grounds and



A house near San Simeon

BIG SUR

The Big Sur coast is best explored by airship or alternatively in a VW microbus and a flaxen haired hippy girl.* It is said that the topography is rivaled only by Kauai's Napali coast for



Garapata Bridge

steepness from mountaintop to ocean floor. As a result there is very little land horizontal enough to make a living. Some have managed, and grandly too. Henry Miller was one of them. Miller is remembered in the world of letters as the author of *Tropic of Cancer*, *Spring Break* and *Tropic of Capricorn*. These weren't summer travelogues but books deemed to be obscene in 1961 in the United States and were banned until a watershed Supreme Court case—*Grove Press Inc. V. Gerstein*. It was this case that helped overturn centuries of book banning in

* I wrote this whole book just so I could say, "flaxen haired hippy girl."

America. It was one of the cornerstones of freedom of speech and of the sexual revolution. Today these books are tame enough to leave in the rec room of a Baptist church.

To me Big Sur will always be synonymous with free love and the perfection of a certain hippy ideal. (Classic definition of hippy: Someone with long hair having more fun than you are.) Sure, Henry did his part by living and writing in Big Sur but really it has always been the wild allure of this stretch of coastline combined with its absence of commercialization that made it an ideal place for hair and consciousness to grow.

Right in the middle of all this steepness and solitude is the Esalen Institute. Reportedly an ancient Indian ceremonial site situated at a sulfur hot springs, it has long been a redoubt for retreat, renewal and a place to plot your next moves. In 1910 Michael Murphy's grandfather bought the land and in 1962 Michael and Richard Price established Esalen.

Recipe for Esalen:

Take equal parts:

Burning Man

Post-Freudian personal
responsibility

Desire for self-improvement

Stir in humor, respect for the
earth and human functions
like eating, sex and death

Add an unreasonable belief in
absurd religions

Pour into a hot tub and steep under the Milky Way until attaining a state of grace



Over the years many charismatic teachers, great thinkers and a good many nut jobs have passed through the gates including: Susan Sontag, Buckminster Fuller, Ray Bradbury, Aldous Huxley, Ansel Adams, Alan Watts, Joseph Campbell, Timothy Leary, Linus Pauling and so many others. A rather different list from the Del Hotel, no? Of course these were the seminar leaders. In the early days a heavily sedated and fully armed Hunter S. Thompson was the night watchman.

I have been to Esalen many times over the last 40 years and continue to find it meaningful even when surrounded by some of the most inaccurate estimations of the universe imaginable. Me, I'm a pragmatic scientific-materialist. My world is very ordered, if not yet fully explained. Esalen is a magnet for fringe thinking. And I mean all sorts of fringe like the radical atheist, Sam Harris, sharing space with Deepak Chopra, radical spiritualist. Even though there is a severe tilt in the direction of magical thinking the atmosphere is charged with goodwill and peaceful intentions. On any given day there are about 125 seekers encountering one another in this oasis from the complex and often counter-serving expectations of the real world.

Years ago Esalen had a reputation of being a place where morals were lax. In fact, there has been a free spirited atmosphere from the beginning but in the last 50 years the U.S. has morphed to a place where Henry Miller's sexually provocative books are now quaint and we are under siege from every direction by licentiousness. If anything Esalen is a dramatic departure from the

guns, greed and pornographic predilections of contemporary life.

At Esalen one finds a free marketplace of ideas and a remarkable absence of people sitting in judgment of each other. In the end Esalen is a place of heightened moral integrity. And listen, it isn't some secret insider deal here. Just check out the catalog online and take the plunge.

Speaking of plunging. It was just north of Esalen that the great airship Macon met its end.

One reason Silicon Valley exists is because the people of Sunnyvale sold the federal government several square miles of land where Moffett Field is today for \$1 if they would locate the dirigible program there. The Feds did and the Macon floated into town. Almost immediately it floated right out again but it was sufficient time for fledgling avionics firms such as Fairchild, Varian, Raytheon and Ampex to feel the influence of federal contract muscle. Hewlett and Packard sold oscilloscopes to the military and The Valley was off to the races.

18th century balloons holding just a few passengers evolved into dirigibles and in the early 1900s they grew to over 800 feet and could circle the earth with luxury accommodations. In the 20s these ships represented the wave of the future as they were the only aircraft that could cross big stretches of ocean and they could carry a great deal of weight.

The Graf Zeppelin included a lounge complete with a piano made of aluminum. Of course when the Germans weren't playing the piano they were busy chucking bombs out of these ships.

The Macon was a warship

but unlike the air corps in Germany ours were naval aircraft carriers. The Macon held five small reconnaissance biplanes which were launched from a crane under its belly. The idea was to sail off the coast and send a swarm of small planes in all directions thereby covering thousands of square miles in case say, the Japanese might become a problem.

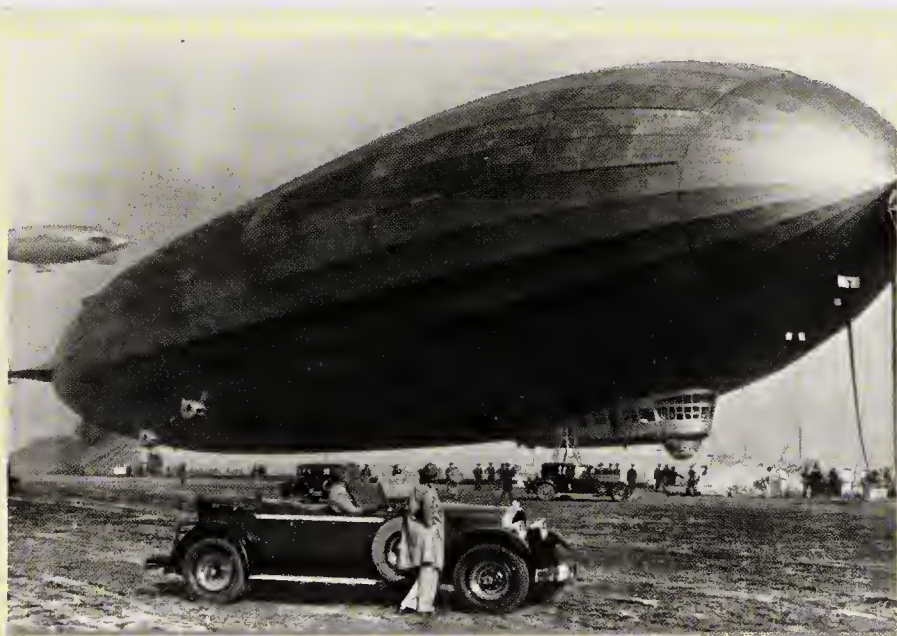
The program was a colossal failure. The Macon crashed 18 months after it arrived on the coast and took the rigid airship program to the bottom of the sea with it.



Parking the airship Los Angeles like this is very hard on the china



The Macon goes to bed



The glorious Graf Zeppelin



Point Lobos just south of Carmel

CARMEL

If there is a bigger literary figure to come at us from the past in California than Jack London I can't name him. Jack had a dazzling, triumphant fumble of a life. Initially he was exceedingly good at overcoming obstacles but finding himself at the very top of his game he lost his footing and the fall killed him. He was the most famous American writer of his age. He was the highest paid one and he was perennially broke. He thought himself to be a meticulous agrarian but he knew nothing of farming. Jack was champion of the downtrodden but wanted to be accepted by the cognoscenti. He was a swashbuckling seafarer but was nearly swamped with all hands aboard a hopelessly ill conceived yacht. He spun tales of supermen and longed to be one of the noble heroes from his books but in the end was a mangled man. A man broken in body and spirit.

His best days were the early ones with his young wife and his bohemian friends. They called themselves 'The Crowd' and lived on the beach in Carmel for several summers in the early 20th century. George Sterling, Robinson Jeffers and John Muir were there. Mary Austin fresh from Navajo country wore a beaded dress and lived in a tipi pitched on the sand near the Londons who lived in a treehouse above the dunes. Upton Sinclair stayed for a time as did Joaquin Miller, that boisterous old fraud.

They swapped stories, paintbrushes and wives. These were proto-love children and this was their time in the sun. Jack reported that they culled honeycombs from the bees of the forest

(doubtful, it's difficult) and wow...made homemade yogurt and ate brown rice just like some of us did 70 years later.

Abalone and mussels could be easily pried from the rocks and became a principle part of their diet. The *Abalone Song* with its many verses was sung as the abalone steaks sizzled in pans of butter over rock-ringed driftwood fires staged in the sand. The song was collectively composed by The Crowd during an early attempt at The Age of Aquarius.

The Abalone Song

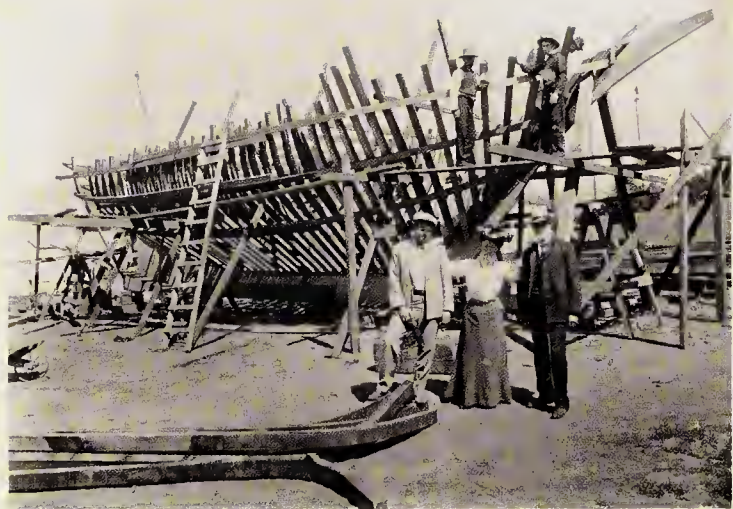
Oh! Some folks boast of quail on toast,
 Because they think it's tony;
 But I'm content to owe my rent,
 And live on abalone.
 Oh! Mission Point's a friendly joint,
 Where every crab's a crony,
 And true and kind you'll ever find
 The clinging abalone.
 He wanders free beside the sea,
 Where e'er the coast is stony;
 He flaps his wings and madly sings—
 The plaintive abalone.
 By Carmel Bay, the people say,
 We feed the lazzaroni
 On Boston beans and fresh sardines,
 And toothsome abalone.

They had no specific program or ideology to bind them so after a few years the Crowd's spirits ran down like so many windup toys and they became increasingly despondent. Nora French drank cyanide in a grand exit followed by George Sterling's histrionic suicide at the Bohemian Grove. Prior to his disembarkation his once heroic looks became ravaged by drink and drugs and a contemporary said he had "a profile as on a Greek coin—but run over by a chariot" and then George's wife did herself in and that particular summer of love was definitely over. Falling from Eden is generally accompanied by a rocky landing.

Old hippies are tedious as any trip to Haight Asbury will confirm. Jeffers, the last of The Crowd, became an embittered superannuated poet living in his fustian cave of a house, overmuch interested in verse about incest and death.

Carmel today is sort of an art colony, if a bit precious, with its high priced real estate and overmuch art made in China. Certainly there are real artists there but they unromantically chug less cyanide laced wine today.

Jack London was raised on the streets of Oakland and was by his account 'a scrappy lad.' At 13 he worked in a cannery and shortly thereafter had a job at a laundry in Belmont. By 15 he found employment as an oyster pirate. Stealing oysters from the many beds in San Francisco Bay paid handsomely and young Jack would raid them at night pulling in as much as \$100. When he finally got caught he became an oyster policeman, an unofficial position involving turning in your pals having just moments before been one of their compatriots. Soon thereafter he signed on as an able-bodied seaman and sailed to the Aleutians in Alaska to hunt seals. On his return he rode the rails to Washington DC with a ragtag group calling themselves Kelly's Army who went to



Jack, Charmian and her father

he built a legendary mansion on his dream ranch in the Valley of the Moon in Sonoma. Before he settled down he commissioned a sailing yacht, the Snark. The yacht was another manifestation of the disjunctive rhythm of his life. He had hired his father-in-law to superintend the construction and after countless time and cost overruns the Snark was launched in 1907. It seems that the father-in-law was a man who had no business with a yacht project. The wood he used was the wrong species and improperly dried so the vessel commenced to come apart even as it was being completed.

Like some of The Crowd the marine toilet

committed suicide before the tiny ship passed the Marin Headlands never to function again. The engine ate its own flywheel and tore loose from its mounts almost as fast—slumping pathetically on its side in the leaking bilge for the duration of the voyage. The enthusiasm of the crew fared no better and they barely limped into Honolulu. Jack and Charmian had planned a 7 year trip around the world but when they lurched into Sydney they sold the wreck for firewood. Jack did, however, get 3 books out of it.

By the time he was 36 Jack began to disintegrate much as his yacht had. His ranch produced little but debts; the modern farming techniques he attempted were ineffective so his crops failed and his animals died. He did finish the great Wolf House with its massive stonewalls, indoor pool and tree trunk roof beams. But it burned to the ground the day before they were to move in. Arson by a disgruntled employee was suspected.

Jack wrote about the man he longed to be, a man with big ideas and great physical power like Wolf Larson the captain in the *Sea Wolf*. But Jack himself became decrepit due to his habit of

demand jobs during a chilling recession. The capital police and the real Army was sent in swinging to put down riots in the capitol and Jack, after having his head cracked by the bulls, returned to Oakland and went to high school. Right, high school. But high school didn't work out so he took an entrance exam and was admitted into the University of California at Berkeley. After a year he figured he had enough and broke off his formal education to write. In a few short years he became known all over the world.

In his 20s and into his 30s Jack flourished. He had a wife he adored, fans who worshiped him and



Ever mindful of their image you can see they posed for a couple of takes



staging massive feasts of nearly raw ducks, bushels of oysters and flagon upon flagon of wine, beer and spirits. He became fat, listless and died of uremic poisoning (his guts burst) at the age of 40.

The Wolf House ruins are now in a state park along with

The House of Happy Walls, the modest dwelling in which his widow Charmian lived out her days kindling the flame of this convoluted and contradictory character. In this house you will find a shelf with a single copy of each of Jack's books and they stretch for nearly 7 feet. So many words—the sum of a great writer. Jack is buried on a knoll not far from the ruins of Wolf House. One of the last things he said to his wife was to bury him on hill the with the 3 immigrant children. Today you can stroll up to the hill and witness his plain tombstone—which has no words written on it at all.



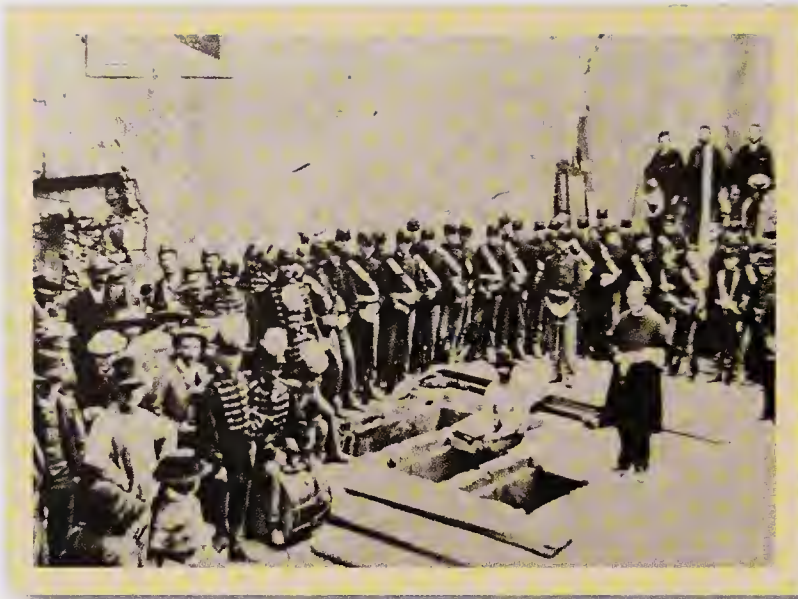
In the late 1950s the heirs to the London estate were selling off many of the souvenirs that Jack and his wife collected during their trip. One such artifact is a sawfish shark snout which had been illustrated with a series of pictographs telling the story of a trading expedition some South



The blessing of the Gullwing

Sea islanders had taken in the mid part of the 19th century. The story has been decrypted and depicts one of the canoes sinking as well as an exchange of merchandise with European ships. This is in the back dining room at Buck's today.

Carmel plays host to the greatest car show in the world every summer. The padres from the mission show up to bless the cars. To me this is perplexing. Is the blessing so they will bring top dollar? Is it to not throw a rod? Or is it an encouragement to land the perfect 100 score with the judges. No, I think it's just some friars trying to get in the show for free. Since the entrance fee is \$300 (not to enter a



As part of the investigation for sainthood they dug up Serra and some of his pals in 1886 to see how they were doing.

Predictably they continued to be deceased.

would think this would actually complement his reputation in a religion where customarily such things are not just tolerated but celebrated. But surprisingly this is not the case.

For years his advocates have been trying to get one more miracle approved by the Vatican. Generally the Pope names saints like kindergärtners name guppies in a bowl. The way sainthood works is thusly: Righteous people go to heaven when they die. Then the folks left behind pray to these saints-in-waiting to intercede on their behalf back on Earth. This is generally limited to recovering from a life threatening illness though you can pray for getting a good lawyer or winning the lottery. The lottery pleas are generally denied but that doesn't stop folks from trying. If you can prove that these saintly interns really did overturn the Laws of the Universe and delivered a miracle then notch one on yer pistol grip and look for just one more. Serra has one miracle under his sash, this from 1987 when a nun prayed to be cured of lupus and waa-la! She was cured (she did die eventually however). Many have tried to claim for Serra the second miracle. A man fell off his horse and was miraculously uninjured. A woman gave birth to a healthy child after being told she might not. Hey Pope! Are you denying the miracle of childbirth? Well look, some Catholics take this seriously. I am not acquainted with any but they are out there) and there is a big push to take old dad over the goal line in 2015.

Father Serra is primarily known around the Bay

car just to come to the event) I think I'll strap on a pink hat and a robe next year.

From our gondola we can see the Carmel Mission near the shore where the friar Junipero Serra is buried. In the late 1700s His Nipster marched the length of California as far as Sonoma hoisting flags, erecting missions and composting the local folks in unmarked graves by the thousands. Serra was a spooky fellow who has found sainthood eluding him for years because even the Catholic prelately find him shuddersome with his predilection to beat his own back with a nine-tailed cat to underline his point that life on earth was a trail of tears. You



Area for being memorialized in San Mateo County between San Francisco and San Jose taking a concrete knee along Interstate 280 as a sculpture with a humongous head and an even bigger hand, finger outstretched—as if pointing at yet one more Indian to deliver to the happy hunting ground. Perhaps he’s accusing the horizon in an unrelenting effort to secure one-more-miracle. In the years before pocket gadgets killed teenage mischief, kids used to hang a tire from his finger as a mocking yoyo but in recent years they have forgotten what a yoyo is. Because it’s simply bad art I think it would be great if someone bulldozed the statue. In fact—it would be a miracle.

MONTEREY

The protected cove of Monterey Bay was first spotted by Cabrillo on November 16, 1542. It was immediately misplaced for the next 160 years. The far better harbor of San Francisco Bay lay to the north and would have easily held all the ships in the world but it was to lay undiscovered until Gaspar Portola spotted it in 1769.

Monterey was the first capital of the northern California region with good cause. Due to the coastal topography it was very easy to enter the cove in any tide and most wind conditions. Today we zip all over the world but if you were in vintage sailing ships these things matter.

As we scooped over the Monterey Peninsula in our big white airship we were put in mind of times past when ships sailed from the other side of the world to visit this remote shore. In the 1700s if you planned to trade along the Pacific Coast you had to have your goods valued and taxed by the Spanish. Imagine sailing from Europe around the bottom of South America and planning to trade in Acapulco and then discovering that you were required to sail to Monterey, unload your ship, pay a tax, reload and sail south where you had just been several weeks before. But Monterey was where the customs house was and it was the law. It was understandably hard to enforce. One enterprising Englishman simply brought a small warship and traded ‘on his gun’ with impunity up and down the coast.

250 years ago it was rough service to be sent to that wasteland called California. It’s fine enough today but contemporary accounts mention food shortages, lack of decent clothing and the punishing isolation.

In Spain the first son of the best families would go into business, the military or politics and in a system known as primogenitor he would inherit all the money. The younger sons became priests and the least promising would be dispatched to California. The far west outposts were essentially staffed with bachelor ne’er-do-wells. Historically the Catholic priesthood has been denied the right to marry and have kids because they had an uncooperative tendency to leave their property to their children instead of the church.

In the late 1820s Spain was finding Mexico ungovernable and the mission system in California dissolved and the era of the great land grant ranchos was born. This concentration of wealth kept interlopers out for a time.

But there is always someone challenging the status quo. On November 20, 1818 a Frenchman named Hippolyte de Bouchard raided the Presidio of Monterey and as a corsair (a pirate in the service of another) raised his flag and held the capital for Argentina. Technically California was Argentinean for two weeks although the farmers and ranchers would have barely taken notice.

In 1842 Commander Thomas ap Catesby Jones (the ap is some sort of Welsh nonsense) of



Larkin's house

in 1827. His ship the Peacock was severely damaged by an enraged sperm whale and nearly sunk. One of the seamen later under ap's command was Herman Melville who would make a ship named the Pequod famous in *Moby-Dick* (yes, it is in fact, hyphenated).

In the 1840s Monterey was still a Mexican town with an American influence. Thomas Larkin was the America council at that time and it was Tom who invented the Monterey colonial building which is a combination of adobe hacienda and Yankee stickframe with a wraparound veranda. It was practical and convivial much like the first newspaper in the West, the *Alta California* which was printed in Spanish and English. The Mexican Californios were all about ease of living and had a reputation for enjoying lavish celebrations. The Californio was a family man with strong kinship ties all over the territory.

The Americans who came in swarms in the 1840s were nearly all young men who, if they had family, had left them in the East. Because they were largely adventurers they tended toward drunken, duplicitous and self-aggrandizing behavior. In copies of the very first newspaper from California printed in Monterey in 1846 you can see a vein of hucksterism and extravagant national pride for this new American territory so recently wrested from the Mexicans. There was a good deal of lip service paid to the notion of including the Mexicans as equals after Mexico lost the

war but it was not to be. The Mexicans became surfs in the land they had previously dominated. Twas ever thus.

Monterey lost its political luster with the first shout of 'gold!' and it soon subsided as the place to be as San Francisco took the crown. Thereafter Monterey was all about fishing and tourists.

Because Monterey is perched on the edge of a world class marine canyon it has long been home to a fishing fleet and cannery culture. There was a substantial Chinese fishing camp a hundred years ago as well as a great many Italians, Japanese and even Gloucestermen. In 1939 around a billion pounds of sardines were landed. Times were fat and the pay was good. But weather changes and overfishing killed the industry completely by the mid 1950s.



This is a photo of smelt if we haven't taken off yet and dolphins if we have

the U.S. Pacific Squadron sailed into Monterey Bay and seized the capital. He had been informed that war had broken out with the Mexicans. Typical of so many battles in California no shots were exchanged. Examining newspapers in town he realized that we were not at war at all. Yikes! He apologized and offered up 4 bottles of brandy, 5 cannon balls and 6 expired naval uniforms as reparations bowing as he tiptoed backwards out the door.

Thomas ap Catesby Jones has a foot in historical notes for an event that happened

The deep cold water in Monterey Bay is ideal for sea life of all sorts. In the 1860s there was a shore whaling operation, a technique practiced up and down the coast. Boats with a brace of 4 or 5 men would row from the shore and harpoon humpbacks, grays, sperms and the occasional blue whale. Folks are familiar with 19th century open ocean whaling but along the California coast there was a tradition of whaling in 28 foot purpose built rowboats which were launched from these stations. The Indians of the Pacific Northwest had been hunting like this for eons (and even the ancient Romans) and the Californios copied it. The hunt took place up to 15 miles from the shore and once the whale was harpooned the boatmen would reel themselves to the whale. The harpoons were only used to catch the “fish” (they knew they were mammals but they called them fish). Once they got close to the exhausted animal the actual slaughter began. The killing was done with long lances, a process which was not quick and certainly bloody. The corpse was towed

to the beach for rendering—the trailing blood drawing the sharks who would lunch on the dying whale. Today this seems insanely gruesome and inappropriate but the sentiment at the time was that there was unlimited number of creatures specifically put on the planet for the use of man. We are more circumspect now. Of course we still commit atrocities like feeding our very own children candy studded donuts.

Once the whale was stripped of blubber the carcass was loosed in the surf free to bump slowly along the beach. The smell was reported to be



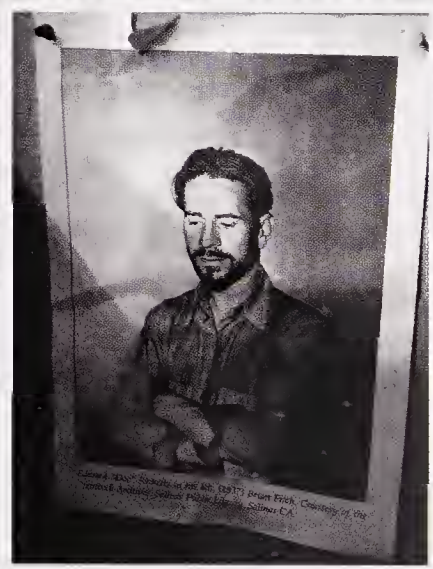
HUGE BASKING SHARK -75-
CAUGHT IN MONTEREY BAY CAL.

“You kilt it, you eat it.”

pretty full bodied and these putangangrenous carcasses had the effect of attracting grizzly bears which swarmed around Monterey in such numbers that in 1860 it was a perilous trip from Carmel to Monterey and the locals took to traveling in armed groups.

Later, when the train finally arrived, tourists from all over came to the seaside for shrimp cocktails and basking shark harpooning. You might ride out on the glass bottom boat and marvel at the sea creatures below. Then for an extra 50 cents they would give you a harpoon and drive up on these 30 to 40 foot sharks and, pretending to be Queequeg, you could stick these slow moving plankton eaters with a harpoon. Eventually the sharks would expire and sometimes the skipper would pump the dead shark full of air and you could have your photo taken dancing on the belly of the cadaver. They really knew how to have a good time back then. Now there are about 11 anchovies in the bay and certainly no harpooners though the humpbacks and blues are back.

Big Sur has its Henry Miller and the Bay Area can claim Jack London but when you think of Monterey—it’s John Steinbeck. Both in his novels and his nonfiction John featured his friends, most notably Ed Ricketts known to all as Doc. Imagine having your best friend fictionalize you in his novels and then being killed by an oncoming train right in the middle



Ed Ricketts

of town. Very picturesque.

Steinbeck is wildly popular even today in Monterey but drive inland 40 miles and his name is mud (at least among the old folks) and has been since he published *Grapes of Wrath*. This book is a fair rendition of the tough times during the Dust Bowl but the folks in Salinas did not enjoy seeing themselves depicted as heartless overlords of the downtrodden.

Pacific Grove fronts Monterey with its curiously small houses. It seems that the town was developed as a Methodist summer revival community so when the 30 x 60 foot wide parcels shed their tents—tiny houses were the outcome. Lands End features some of the most magnificent coastline anywhere and has long been a spot where wedding and honeymoon pictures are posed. In 1999 this turned out badly for one couple when the photographer had the bride walk out to the edge of the sea and a wave took her. Sad but true.

Thoroughly depressed, we sailed on up the coast to Watsonville.

Watsonville is called the Strawberry Capital of the World; The Town That Time Forgot and The Most Boring Place in the World—by local teenagers. It was home to one badass bar back in the 1840s when Monterey was declared a dry town. They made some mighty stiff corn liquor right on site. It was an early brewpub but with a tad more excitement than we see in these places today. There were so many gunfights that they could practically recycle the liquor that streamed out the bullet holes in the drunken crowd.

Note on 19th century tippling: People talk about alcohol consumption today as causing problems but historically in America it was far more serious. 150 years ago the average consumption of spirits was 3 times what it is today. This level persisted into the next century and led to Prohibition. In the last few decades alcohol consumption has been steadily declining.

Watsonville, even then, was prime farming country. In fact there is none better in the world. Col. John C. Fremont realized this and as he decamped for one of his sorties around the region he asked his good friend Thomas Larkin to buy a certain farm for him in Watsonville because when he was done appraising the west for annexation John intended to retire as a gentleman farmer. He wrote to T. Larkin to use “your best judgment as to the details of the purchase.” Tom looked into it and decided that the good colonel would not make a good farmer and Larkin would save his friend the sticky-booted heartache of agriculture by purchasing a hardscrabble ranch in the Sierras for his friend instead. Then Tom bought this Watsonville property for his own.

When the colonel returned and found that all the papers had been duly filed he flew into a spittoon kicking rage. He had been roundly *had*—duped *and* swindled! But Larkin was the local big shot and the John C. was stuck with this classic switcheroo. Glumly he went to inspect this so called Mariposa Ranch in the dessicated mountains to the east. Oh...*that* Mariposa Ranch? The one where more gold was discovered than anywhere else on earth? Ever? Yeah, that’s the one. John got conned into a gold mine. Fremont had a city named for him. Larkin just got a street.

SANTA CRUZ

This is where they used to hold the Miss California Pageant, which was ruined by protesters in the 1980s who showed up to holler against the objectification of women. A rhubarb erupted when several women wearing dresses made of meat began squealing outside the pageant declaiming that gawking at women wearing bathing suits was evil. (Apparently it was permissible to gape at the protesters in meat bikinis.)

As the meat clad protesters hit full volume a phalanx of vegetarians swept in wailing against the women who were covered in meat. This protest backfired. People like wearing meat. “Good

looking skirt steak babe!” Hey wait, isn’t everyone basically covered in meat? The police swept in and broke the fracas up. Thank god, no telling how much damage these women might have done. These brawls are what pass for full employment in Santa Cruz. (Santa Cruz is the same town where nuclear weapons are banned along with nonexistent fracking.)

So let’s ask ourselves, “Do beauty pageants objectify women?” Sure, definitely. Beauty pageants for tots started a lot longer ago than many folks think. They were a staple of ‘boardwalk’ culture dating back a 100 years. If you dress up a 3 year old as a hooker and put her on TV it’s no big surprise if she becomes one. This isn’t just playing dress up with other little kids because there are adults playing too. One is given pause about the parenting skills being exhibited along with the toddlers. But here’s the thinking: The parents are not necessarily in denial that putting little girls



*Miss Behavin’ being arrested
in her meat dress 1982*

on stage in makeup and padded hips and bras will make the kids more likely to be objectified as adults. They think it’s cool. Me, I think I’d rather take up whaling.

Santa Cruz is rimmed by Seacliff Drive and it was there where I happened on a house full of students from the local university watching the Moon landing in 1969. This was live footage and we could all see that it was a BIG deal. There had been speculation before touchdown that the surface might be composed of very fine powder and the Moon Lander would sink out of sight. We let out our breath when we saw it was only about an inch deep. Ever prepared for Moon tourism we actually hauled a car all the way to the Moon so if we didn’t like where we landed we could just drive somewhere else. What? We got all the way to the Moon and immediately want to take a drive? “Hey, it’s boring *here*, let’s go over *there*.” This is kookily American. The astronauts also brought a golf club and balls (to their credit not a full bag and a caddy, but still) and Alan Shepard hit a ball about 4 zillion yards. He used a 6 iron. I might have used a wood but he still does hold the low gravity distance record so what do I know? The balls have not been found but they do know where the car is.



Learning poise and confidence 1934

Santa Cruz has a well deserved reputation for being stuffed to the rafters with hippies. I think this speaks well for the town. Somehow today that term *hippy* seems to have a slightly negative cast which I think is too bad because we were pretty cool.

Funny though, what made us hippies was commitment to liberal thinking, embracing alternative energy, long hair, organic food, drug taking and travel to exotic places. We sure lost the lock on these things because by these measures there are lot more hippies today then ever before. But bell bottoms and paisley are securely dead and buried.

A note on paisley: Paisley was a style of psychedelic design popular on posters and eventually clothes. In 1970 everyone had some paisley. It was a fluid shape, swirling with multiple colors thought to resemble an acid trip. It originated in Persia nearly 2,000 years ago and reached its pinnacle on May 3rd 1970 at around 11am.

I know when it peaked because I was there when it happened. I lived on the North Side in Berkeley and was a fairly typical student of the era. Eat granola and yogurt for breakfast, go to school, bolt in the middle of class for the riots outside, scamper through the teargas with the police in my wake, break for lunch, meet up with a girl from class and have casual sex, study in the

library, go sell some weed. Where *does* the day go?

One Saturday morning I went up the hill to where Country Joe MacDonald and some of the Fish, a very big antiwar rock band, lived. I was there to make a delivery. The band had a Cadillac hearse painted paisley as well as clothes and wall art. It had been a pretty rough night apparently because when I arrived some of the band members were in the driveway pouring lighter fluid on a pile of paisley clothes and posters. Then the whole jumble went up with a **WOOSH!** and paisley was over. Then we all went inside and ate waffles.

The last paisley sighting was in 2010 at the Winter Olympics when Azerbaijan's team sported troubling paisley trousers.



The Azerbaijanees last gasp at paisley

SAN MATEO COAST

The coast from Santa Cruz to Pescadero has never been developed beyond a few farms lining the bluffs above the seashore. It is commonly known as the place where elephant seals congregate to mate and raise hell on the beach at Año Nuevo. Thousands of these Jabbas glop



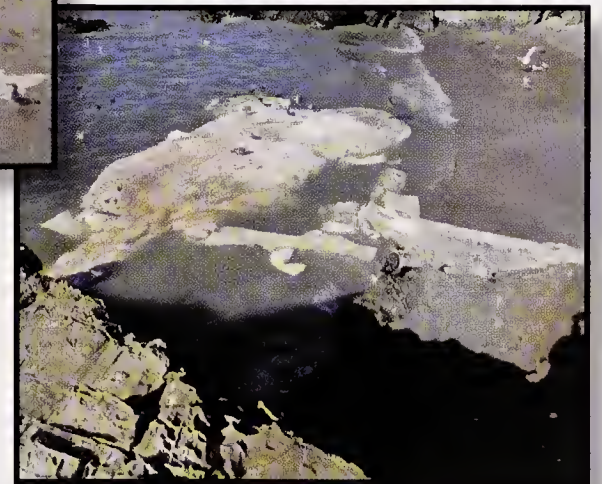
around on the sand in the spring to the delight of visitors from all over the world. The invasion of the beach here is a fairly new phenomenon. When ancient people roamed the area it was not possible for seals to lollygag on the beach because the locals thought the seals were floppy grocery stores. It was only after the Indians retreated into their casinos that these creatures came back.

From the air we had a clear view of these magnificent beasts. The females are big enough, but the males can run 6,000 pounds. The bulls can be fairly agile and have a tendency to climb high up on the rocks, sometimes hundreds of feet from the shore. The males can be pretty cantankerous and the older ones are customarily stitched with the scars from previous bouts. This is nature "red of tooth and claw" and the whole fight is about the ladies. The elephant seals have magnificent tusks and they use them. We hovered over one match and laid odds on a serious

looking Mike Tyson type but the smaller one was quick to the trigger and bested the old man.

Along the entire coast we were almost never out of sight of armadas of whales and regiments of dolphins. Parliaments of fish

like maelstroms of polished blades could be seen whirling away from porpoises in snapping pursuit.



Week 1, jawbone in foreground

Week 2

Week 4

Some sea creatures move less fast like the blue whale that washed ashore at Bean Hollow Beach below Pescadero in 2011. She came in on a high tide and ejected a nearly full term calf. As I've said the blue whale is the heaviest animal ever and here was one of the biggest of the species at nearly 90 feet. I went down each week and bore witness the disintegration which was remarkably fast. In a month there was very little left and in another month not even the bones, some of which weighed over a ton, were in evidence. It is a felony to disturb marine mammals alive or dead but somehow the bones had enough life left in them to wander away.

Sometimes folks are in a big hurry to clear the beach of whales so they *take measures*. This story sounds completely fabricated and in fact it circulated for decades as an urban myth until the TV footage of the adventure was uncovered decades after the 1970 event. It seems that a 45 foot sperm whale washed up on an Oregon beach and the highway department was tasked with disposing of it. Instead of the tried and true dig-and-bury method the highway superintendent decided to blow the whale up with dynamite with the idea that the resulting bits would be carried away by seagulls. He ordered 20 fifty lb. cases of dynamite stuffed inside the corpse. A reporter was on site and commented that maybe it should be about 20 sticks but he was ordered to stay back and mind his own business.

A crowd gathered to witness the spectacle. The blast of a half ton of dynamite is a thing to behold. The whale was indeed blown to smithereens. Unfortunately most of the smithereens were

rather larger than a bird could carry and the blubber rained down on the screaming spectators who barely escaped serious harm even as one lump, the size of a La-Z-Boy chair, crushed the reporter's new Oldsmobile. And the birds? Those who hadn't been pureed to an avian jelly by the shock wave took off to a place where the whales were less detonational.

Back in San Mateo we overflowed a small coveys of homes hunkering on the bluffs above the sea, built before the Coastal Commission made development nearly impossible. It seems normal and expected to have a wild seashore but it could have gone another way. In Southern California there is nearly unbroken development from Malibu to San Diego and the San Mateo coast could have looked like that as well. Citizens rose up to curtail construction to the eventual benefit of all. It's not that there isn't wild coastline in the world but this coastline is adjacent to the Bay Area with its 10 million people. Thank you to those of you who preserved this.

In 2014 a billionaire bought a stretch of beach on the San Mateo coast and attempted, once again, to restrict access. After years of legal wrangling he lost and now *everyone* wants to drop trow and wiggle in the waves on this particular. I saw Barbra Streisand surfing there recently.



"Stand back folks—we're professionals."

MAVERICK'S



The surf is up

the world's most audacious surfing spot could have gone unnoticed right in the middle of the town of Half Moon Bay until the mid 1970s.

At Maverick's one finds some of the most gargantuan waves in the world and amazingly it

In 1995 a pathologist in Maryland was dismantling some dead guy's face when he discovered a jaw muscle which had never been described in the medical literature. The muscle is now called the stephenomandibularis (yeah, his name is Stephen) and it is the only muscle to be discovered in the human body in modern times. It's always been there in plain sight right next to the nose on your face. It seems that this tiny muscle had been thought to be part of a larger one but it turned out to be a distinct muscle. If this can happen I guess it is possible that

wasn't until 1975 that anyone surfed them. From 1975 to 1990 only one person, 17 year old Jeff Clark, was out there shredding. Jeff named the spot for his dog. Because the entry is across some pretty fearsome rocks and the break is several hundred feet from shore it seemed impossible before he went for it. On big days the waves rise to 50 feet and are fast, vertical and unforgiving. Maverick's is the place where once a year someone yells BREAK! and pro surfers drop what they are doing and have 24 hours to come to Half Moon Bay and go steep.

Top surfers have stayed underwater too long here and not made it home, so it is definitely a spot for only the most skilled wave warriors. We took the Eureka out for a look during the event and I heard later from a contestant that it is a bit distracting to have the sun go out as our shadow passed by just before he entered a pipe the size of a railway tunnel. Sorry man.

THE FARALLON ISLANDS



The Farallons are the first thing offshore mariners look for when trying to find the entrance to San Francisco 27 miles to the east. This cragged rookery—rife with stony inequalities is known with only a half-mocking jab as the Devil Teeth. From a distance as you come up on the fog shrouded, wind and spume swept shore they look like the ideal place to remand exiled politicians. There isn't much history to these islands save for the curious egg industry that sprang up during the Gold Rush. There was never enough to eat in 1849 so enterprising sailors gathered eggs from



Eggers take a break

the island and sold them in San Francisco for up to \$1.50 each. In the gold fields they could bring even more. So popular were these sardine flavored eggs that there were as many as 30 men gathering them in the mid 19th century on these tiny islands. The eggers wore special coats with dozens of pockets where they secreted the eggs as they dangled above the vicious surf. The eggs were so valuable that the San Francisco Egg Company armed their men with orders to shoot to kill anyone not connected with their enterprise. And kill they did when the Egg War of 1863 broke out as two rival companies commenced shootin' one another. Two men died which by California standards, where almost no one is actually killed in battle, is a blood bath.

Today the islands are patrolled by less vicious but equally exclusionary guardians. These are the ecowardens protecting the birds and sea mammals. If you approach by boat they examine you with field glasses looking for possible fishing or other sorts of infractions. If you attempt a landing you are vigorously turned away so naturally people really want to try. A few years ago there was a scandal when the keepers were caught selling visits to the place for up to \$10,000. You can see the island clearly from a boat but the landing prohibition seems to drive some folks nuts.

Here one finds the habitat of the great white shark. We used to boat to the islands and chum with chicken guts to bring them round but this never worked so we finally stuffed balloons in a pair of corduroy pants and tried using this half manikin as bait. Still no luck. Stupid sharks!



Chris Lindland invents pants fishing

THE GOLDEN GATE

On we sailed, in our sturdy ship, over the Golden Gate Bridge. Most folks think that the Gold Rush was the event from which the strait gets the name but it was actually named a few years before when John C. Fremont called it that. The entrance reminded him of what he pictured the Golden Horn, a strait in ancient Byzantium (now Istanbul), looked like.* I had always wanted to see this storied place in Turkey but was disenchanted when I crossed it in a skiff I found a malodorous slew bubbling with rotting fish heads and worse. Our Gate is much nicer.



Two wrecks at the Gate



A better way to travel

*I know I've mentioned this before but I'm gotten paid by the word here—like Tolstoy.



Traveling in the Eureka is convenient, sensational and elegant. The ship seats about 7 for long hauls and more for shorter trips. Regulations call for two pilots and a flight attendant. In that we were sometimes on training flights there would sometimes be 3 pilots with co-owner Alexandra Hall acting as the flight attendant. Her job was really one of saving us in case of an emergency. What that might look like I don't know. Flying in this magnificent ship is like hanging below a very stable cloud and even in high winds it always felt safe to me. In fact this is the very safest aircraft of any kind in the world. Since they switched to helium there have been no serious accidents at all.

As a photo platform an airship is unrivaled. People have been shooting from the air as long as there has been photography and a great many inventive methods have been deployed. One of the cleverest was a rig built by George Lawrence at the turn of the 19th century.

A few weeks after the 1906 earthquake George came to San Francisco with his giant camera. His famous photo is a 160 degree panorama taken at 2,000 feet employing a camera suspended



COPYRIGHT
GEO. F. LAWRENCE CO.
CHICAGO MAY 26, 1906

PHOTOGRAPH OF
SAN FRANCISCO IN RUINS
FROM LAWRENCE CAPTIVE AIRSHIP
2000 FEET ABOVE SAN FRANCISCO BAY

below a string of 17 kites capturing the entire city on a 17 X 48 inch negative.

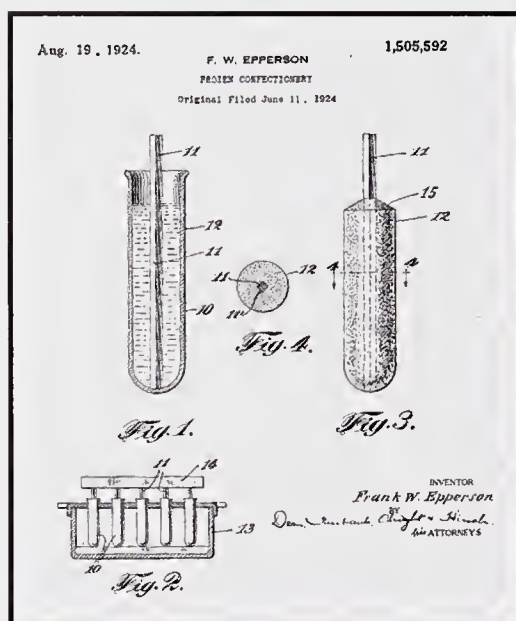
From this he made contact prints which he sold for \$125. George made at least \$15,000 in sales from this one photograph.

If you examine the photo online you can blow it up to reveal people on the streets, tent cities, horses and wagons and a few early automobiles. The detail is compelling but unfortunately the picture was shot in the afternoon when the winds were strong enough to lift the rig but because the camera was pointed at the sun the contrast is somewhat diminished. Still, it is a thrilling photo.

The oldest aerial photo is from 1860. It's a picture of downtown Boston shot from a hot air balloon.



YERBA BUENA-SAN FRANCISCO



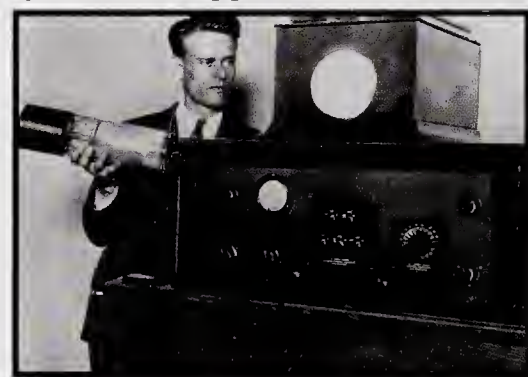
When writing about San Francisco I want to put 20,000 words in a blender and hit the puree button—then sluice the frothy brew down your gullet in a single gulp. But like most stories I have to tell it piece by piece even if every part of the story vies as the most important. So, I'll start with firsts.

In 1905 in San Francisco 11 year old Frank Epperson mixed powdered flavoring and water on his back porch where he left it overnight with the stirring stick still in it. Just before dawn Frank made history. The mercury fell to a record low and the next morning, the kid discovered that his drink had frozen solid. The event remained rooted in his mind for 18 years until 1923 when Frank introduced the Epperson, a frozen drink on a stick at Neptune Beach, an amusement park in Alameda just east of San Francisco. It sold like crazy so Frank applied for a patent for his 'frozen confectionery',

which he called the Eppsycle Ice Pop. One of Frank's kids said, "Pop, the name is dumb." So he changed it to the Popsicle thereby achieving immortality and making a truckload of money.

Other vital inventions to emerge from the City by the Bay include: the slot machine, the fortune cookie (the Japanese disputed this but gave up the claim as part of WW2 reparations), Chinese laundries and riding your horse into a saloon with sixguns blazing yell, I'm rich!—And oh, television.

But before all this happened San Francisco had a real problem because the early buildings tended to melt down in the rain or burn up when it was dry. *Philo Farnsworth inventor of TV*



Nice heada hair...or nice hat

In 1795 the Spanish built the first presidio at the entrance to the bay. The directive from Spain mandated that they follow a prescribed protocol and build the fort out of adobe like those to the south. Even if it is essentially an elevated hole—adobe is actually pretty great stuff—until it rains. When it does it turns instantly back into mud. Being good soldiers they attempted to follow orders so they built and rebuilt the fort at least 3 times. But they soon ran out of enthusiasm for the technique and erected a flimsy stone fort only to see it immediately blown down in a gale. They never did build a decent fort though they did mount the cannons. However the cannons were useless because they couldn't fire all the way across the entrance to the Bay. Actually less than useless as the gunpowder was either wet or non existent.

In the early 1800s San Francisco was a squalid place. The robust rancho culture of the south dwindled to diddly as one reached the scrubby peninsula. From the Presidio the sentinels kept a wary eye to the west in fear of an incursion by the Russians who had set up an

outpost at Sitka in Alaska. Russia was an emerging world power and at this farthest stretch of both Spain and Russia the tendrils did not quite touch. Until they did.

In 1806 Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov—Chamberlain of Tsar Alexander I of Russia—arrived aboard the *Juno* in San Francisco Bay determined to barter for food with the Spanish Presidio. Comandante Don Jose Dario Arguello was alarmed to see a Russian warship in front of his dirt hut of a fort and he knew if they sailed close in they could blast the walls to dust or mud...must? to *must* with one salvo. The fort was equipped with cannons but lacked even wet gunpowder. Jose realized that diplomacy was called for and knew that firing a welcoming salute was essential protocol. Still—no powder, so one of the soldiers rowed out to the Russians and, using hand signals, begged enough powder to mount a tepid salute.

This nicety having been performed the Russians strode ashore. Everyone was tense, made more so when they discovered that the parties couldn't parlay-voo each other's language. Fortunately one of Russians knew some Latin so the Spanish priest was called from the mission and they were finally able to communicate. It was spring and the Russians had endured a harrowing winter. The Spanish were known for their hospitality and a convivial atmosphere developed over the next few days. This was due in part because of the growing infatuation between the majestic Russian commander and Jose's 15 year old daughter Maria de la Concepción. By all accounts she was a great beauty and, as in a grand opera, the players were instantly smitten. In fact this has been the subject of an opera, if a modern rock opera, in Russia, and the story is a well known part of Russian history.

Nikolai and Concepción spent the weeks they had together exploring the San Francisco Peninsula and falling in love. Before his departure, Nikolai asked for Concepción's hand in marriage. Though the proposal initially undid Concepción's parents who were concerned with the religious differences as well as the biggish distance between California and Russia, Nikolai was a such a dashing figure with glittering gold epaulets, highly polished jack-boots and a chest resplendent with medals (which stood in stark contrast to the Spanish soldiers who wore patched and shabby uniforms) that the Arguellos finally warmed up to the idea.



Concepción at 15

Nikolai had to return to his garrison at Sitka to settle some affairs but he promised to return for the wedding as soon as possible. Maybe they couldn't shoot but the Spanish excelled at grand fandango weddings and everyone was thrilled that finally after years of waiting for something to happen, something was going to happen. Exact scheduling was not possible considering the vagaries of tide and sky so the date was set for vaguely a few weeks hence, 3 months at the most. As the 3 month mark came the Arguellos tacked on another week and then another. Soon the time was marked in months and finally years.

The *Juno* had departed on May 21, 1806 for Sitka. Arriving in Alaska, Nikolai found he had been recalled to Moscow and had no choice but to make the withering passage home across the Pacific and over Siberia reaching for St. Petersburg. On the journey he caught pneumonia repeatedly and each time he failed to recover completely before striking out on the frozen trail again. During his third relapse in March of 1807, Nikolai fell from his horse and gave up the ghost—wedged in a rocky crevasse in a dreary hamlet half way across Siberia.

As the years dragged on Concepción waited and waited some more, eventually becoming California's first nun—longing for her handsome chamberlain all through the remaining 51 years of her life.

Just before the Civil War the U.S. Corps. of Engineers built a new brick fort right down by the water at the foot of today's Golden Gate Bridge. There they installed cannons (and laid in some dry powder) capable of bouncing cannon balls off the water and finally making it all the way across the harbor's entrance. The fort was completed just in time for the beginning of the war but it was soon discovered that, as had happened at Fort Sumter, a masonry fort could be easily blown to bits by the guns aboard the ships of the day and the brick became man-shredding shrapnel. No matter, the Confederates failed to materialize anyway.

Realizing that Spain was failing to carve an appropriate use out of the land, other European powers felt that they could take better advantage of the opportunity. In 1798 George Vancouver beseeched the British Crown not to waste an opportunity to seize the West Coast. Jean Laperrouse of the French Royal Navy urged the same of the king of France. In the 1840s a group of French Canadians hatched a plot to team up with John Sutter (who they mistakenly believed to be French not Swiss) to take California for the French Canadians. We could be hearing: "To continue in English press 1, in Spanish press 2, in French press 3, in..."

The Spanish garrisons along the coast billeted soldiers who were there to repel invaders and to protect the mission fathers from the natives. One early writer described the Indians as "indolent, squalid, syphilitic and prone to die in great numbers." They were wholly unsuited as slaves and slaves they were, if not in name, certainly in fact. Converting the locals to compliant and productive sub-members of society had worked well enough in Old Mexico and parts further south but it never took hold in California.

Except for place names the Spanish had very little influence on San Francisco. This might be because there wasn't a great deal of bedroom hopping in Yerba Buena and environs as had been the case closer to the equator so there failed to emerge the amalgamation that was the rule in Mexico. There is a Mission churchyard in San Francisco jumbled with Spanish and Indian bones and though the Mission District is full of Mexican Americans they are more recently arrived.

The missions ceased operation in confusion when Juan Bautista Alvarado, a Californio, forced dissolution of the Franciscan controlled mission system. When the missions lost financial support they fell apart, quite literally, as the roofs caved in and the adobe dissolved. The majority of the missions we see today have been almost entirely reconstructed. A few have been left in their lumpish state for comparison.

The Gold Rush

There has always been a great deal of hyperbole about the California Gold Rush. One writer said, "Each tale was taller than the next and even the lies were true."

500 years ago it was the lure of gold that led Cortez first to Mexico City and later to look for the lands of Calafia. Gold is colorful and portable. It held its value and it could be mined by the effort of a single individual. Plant wheat, invent Google or look for magnesium nodules on the ocean floor if you will, but try riding through the streets of San Francisco yelling "Magnesium nodules! Magnesium nodules! Just rolling around 15,000 feet deep on the ocean floor!" and see how many folks abandon their babies in the crib. No, it's gold that drives people mad.



Gold is held so reverentially in the psyche that there are virtually no slang terms for it. The name in Latin is *Alium* meaning shining dawn and shine it does because gold doesn't oxidize. And it can be fashioned into mobile expressions of wealth. I was once at the Oakland Museum and I came upon a Gold Rush era cigar box. I said to my companion that if I were to steal anything from the joint it would be this. A nearby guard overheard me and said that I wouldn't be the first because this very item had been stolen and retrieved—twice! I know my plunder.

On Wikipedia an estimate of all the gold ever mined is 161,000 tons. How they could have kept track of the yield from say the 3rd century BC mines in the Urals is beyond my meager powers of imagination. It is said that nearly all gold ever mined is still in our hands

because gold is rarely lost. If you brought all the gold into a football stadium and melted it into one solid block covering the field it would be about 3 feet thick which would no doubt ruin the grass and the goal posts would certainly have to be raised.

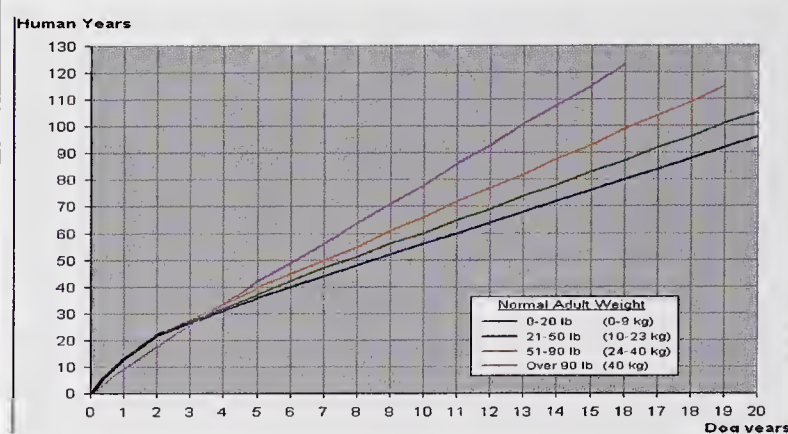
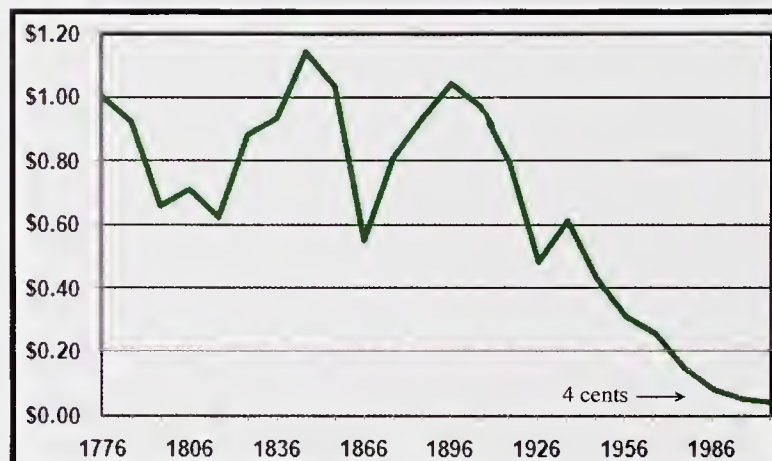
Generations of immigrants have been attracted by the California Dream. Orange growers, oil drillers, movie makers, wheat farmers, airplane builders, and dot commers—each having their boom times after the original Gold Rush but it was 1849 that really seized the world's attention. One reason is that gold and silver are pure and instant capital as soon as they are collected, no manufacture or marketing is necessary.

It is estimated that 6,000 prospectors came for the gold in 1848. Some 90,000 arrived in California in 1849—about half by land and half by sea. By 1855 at least 300,000 gold-seekers, merchants, and other immigrants had arrived in California from all over the world. In the 12 years between 1848 and 1860 the population of San Francisco jumped from 800 to 150,000. It was the biggest relocation of people since the Crusades.

Most folks are familiar with the discovery of a few nuggets by John Marshall at the sawmill Sutter was building on the American River. It was this that started the Gold Rush. However this was not when gold was first discovered in California. Mary Clark found gold a few months before John Marshall and told anyone who would listen. No one listened. And gold wasn't discovered in 1849 either. The 49ers came on the news but the actual rush began in early 1848.

Today we are all familiar with inflation. One trillion Zimbabwe dollars was enough to buy an egg in 2010 only to climb to 10 trillion a few days later. So an egg for a dollar in 1849 (or as much as 5) doesn't sound particularly extreme.





Let's settle inflation once and for all. On the chart you can see that an 1849 dollar was worth about 35 times more than today. The older you are the more inflation upsets you. 'Why, when I was a kid you could go to moving picture show for a nickel!' Sure old timer, and shoes for your mule were cheap too. The fact is American society has more buying power than ever and inflation is just numbers on a page. Clip this handy table, fold it and put it in your wallet. Go ahead, I don't care. All books get ground up eventually. After you cut this out—flip it over and you have a handy table of dog years as a bonus.

During the Gold Rush, in the gold fields, you could pay \$300 for a 25 lb bag of flour, \$1 for a pill, any kind of pill; \$43 dollars for breakfast (the breakfast—two eggs, hog meat of some sort, and two bottles of beer (refer to the table...[no, not the dog-years table {I love this concentric punctuation <try it /it's really fun\>}})). There was so much money flowing and such a demand that prices shot up for everything. In real dollars things cost far more than today during the Gold Rush. In 1850 in Los Angeles a building lot in the middle of town cost \$50. In Sacramento and San Francisco a lot could sell for \$50, then a month later for \$500 and one week later for \$1,500. In 1849 gold was pegged at \$20 an ounce and all shopkeepers took gold dust as payment.



In the beginning the rewards were outsized as well. It was said that there was so much gold that you had to be a fool or plum lazy to not find a goodly bit and it was commonly remarked that it was as easy to dig gold as to steal it.

3 men panned 90 lbs in 3 days (keep in mind there are 12 ounces of gold in a troy pound not 16, but still). One nugget was unearthed that weighed 161 pounds. Two Swedes made \$50,000 their first month. A single pan yielded half a pound of gold. As with any mania trying to unbutton the facts from the fantasy is as tough as nailing a cockroach to a cat.

San Francisco's Barbary Coast emerged from the massive influx of treasure seeking Gold Rushers. At the end of 1849, out of a population of about 25,000, only some 300 were women and an estimated two thirds of those were, ahhh, flexible in their outlook toward men. Miners, sailors, and sojourners with a hanker for female companionship and salacious entertainment surged in sweaty torrents in the streets of San Francisco fueling a wildness unequalled anywhere else in the world. Legions of men with shady pasts rolled in with a wide variety of skills including real estate swindling, pimping, card sharking and plain ol back-shootin—all in an effort to extract the

gold filling the pockets of men dazed by liquor, lust and laudanum.

Johannes Sutter (he later called himself John) was one of the earliest immigrants to the west 10 years prior to the Gold Rush. This resourceful fellow set up shop near today's Sacramento in 1839 when there were only about a thousand gringos* on the entire coast. He laid claim to tens of thousands of acres for his cattle and built the most formidable fort in the region. He bought the cannons from the failed Russian colony at Fort Ross and granted himself a commission as captain. On special occasions John dressed in an expired U.S. Army uniform from the War of 1812. He then hoisted his flag—declaring his empire to be New Helvetia (Latin for New Switzerland), and *Sheeeezam!* he had himself an empire (note: If you go to all the trouble of building an empire it is just a bit de minimus to take the title 'captain'. I would go for Generalissimo or better yet Emperor and medal up the chest fercrisake.)

The Mexican's were certainly miffed by Sutter's upstartery but they were chronically short of guns, shoes and zeal. They had bigger problems like the looming Mexican American War so they left him alone. Sutter was very generous to other immigrants and we were taught in school that he was warmhearted and kind. But, like the Indians gleefully handing over the keys to Columbus, the facts are less charitable to John's memory. John employed kidnapping, food deprivation and slavery to force Indians to work for him. While he did forge alliances with some indigenous people, largely Christian converts, he enslaved hundreds (one report mentions over 500 defacto Sutter slaves) of Indians keeping them in locked pens and feeding them out of troughs with his farm animals. He sent armed posses after those who escaped and he captured men, women and children from remote villages and sold them to rancheros up and down the coast. He would get his though.

As already noted John Marshall was building a sawmill for Sutter when on January 24th 1848 he discovered what he thought might be gold in a stream miles upriver from the fort. The two Johns were so unfamiliar with the metal in its native state that they consulted an encyclopedia to see what sort of test they could perform to verify it. When they were convinced it was gold Sutter tried to persuade Marshall to keep it on the downlow because, as he accurately predicted, it would not be in his interest to have his land overrun by prospectors.

The great irony is that when gold was found on Sutter's land it quickly ruined him. Cries of **GOLD!** caused his laborers to run for the hills. His mills and workshops stood idle and the Russians, presuming he was now rich, pressed him for payment for the guns and tools he had bought from Ft. Ross on credit. Worst of all, the wife he had left in Europe came west for her piece of the action. He had counted himself well rid of her and was dismayed when the shrill woman showed up. John spent the rest of his life trying in vain to persuade Congress to pay him for his lost empire and died in poverty with his disenchanted wife there to keep slapping him upside the head reminding him of his spectacular fall.

When the first small pouch of gold dust made its way to San Francisco no one was particularly interested. In fact the discovery only made page 4 and this in a 4 page paper. One citizen



*The origin of the term *gringo* for *non Spanish* speaker is murky but some sources say it was a shortened term from a song U.S. soldiers sang as they marched “**Green** grows the grass in my old Kentucky home.” And it doesn't mean just *white man* according to the Apaches who called black soldiers (the Buffalo Soldiers of the 1880s) gringos, much to their surprise.

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did have some imagination and this was Sam Brannon. Sam took a handful of the yellow stuff and charged his horse through the streets yelling, "Gold! Gold has been discovered on the American River!" This took only about 30 seconds as there were only about 800 people living in San Francisco at the time. Most of the residents including Sam were Mormons but the lure of gold immediately popped the buttons off their godly intentions to become simple merchants.

The news spread all over the west coast and an amphibious armada of prospectors sailed in from as far as Hawaii, Australia and Chile. Reports that there was a vein of solid gold 17 miles long, 3 feet thick and just a yard underground drove folks into a frenzy. That story wasn't true but there really was plenty of gold to go around and many of the prospectors in the first year did very well. It was estimated at the time that the average take by miners in 1848 was about \$1,000.

There was a tremendous sense of convivial cooperation in the gold fields at first because everyone seemed to be getting rich. One dispatch read, "Sally up the Sacramento and reach into any stream and pull forth a fortune." There was a good deal of gold in the ground and plenty of big talk in the air. This had the immediate effect of depopulating the coastal towns from Santiago to Sitka. Three quarters of the citizens of San Francisco and nearly all men left for the gold country.

Stores were shuttered. Schoolteachers left in the middle of lessons. In San Francisco the newspaper stopped printing and cows were abandoned mooing to be milked. In a few months the eyes of the world were burning with gold fever and San Francisco was where the hysteria led.

The Argonauts, as the press named them, came from South America, Asia and Europe but most came from the eastern United States, a great many



hailing from New York and Boston.

There were 3 principal paths to California. One could sail the 16,000 miles round The Horn at the bottom of South America which took 5 to 8 months. At \$150 to \$200 this was the least expensive way to go and about 500 ships made the trip in 1849. Amazingly very few of these ships sank which is remarkable because many were not in such terrific shape.

One vessel took 80 days to round The Horn alone—about 75 miles. But over the course of the year only about 50 of the 30,000 travelers (keep in mind these weren't children or old folks) lost their lives so it was considered safe enough even if the quarters were wildly cramped and the trip was achingly slow. Aboard ship you were promised the prison-like rations, bedbugs, possible insanity and week after week of seasickness if you traveled that route. And these promises were kept.

The quickest way was by steamer to Panama then chancing a perilous crossing of the Isthmus. Two short months. This route was expensive and had the most fatalities. Typhoid, dysentery, malaria, infection and bullet holes were real threats and since you had to run the jungle in a dug-out canoe and on mule back you couldn't haul the required prospecting equipment with you. There was also the problem of unreliable transport on the Pacific side. Many a traveler was left stranded on the beach for days or weeks. Some enthusiastic souls set off in open boats and canoes. One quartet paddled a 30 foot canvas decked canoe from Panama to San Francisco and up the Sacramento and Feather Rivers.

There were a few steamships that could make a straight run up the west coast but most were sailing ships and few were the swift and commodious clippers. The typical vessel was a 90 to 125 foot bark or brig and they couldn't point hard on the wind so they had to run nearly to Hawaii to find a workable heading to take them to San Francisco. Some miscalculated and ended up in Baja California and then had to reach out and make the run a second time. There was more than one case of prospectors getting off in Baja and walking the 1,500 miles north. One ship zigged and zagged across the Pacific taking 78 days to go from Nicaragua to San Diego.

A good many of the ships arriving in San Francisco were whalers and came lad-



Nearly all these ships went to the bottom of the bay

en from oceans all over the world. They heaved the anchor over the side and the crews and officers alike bolted for the gold fields too impatient even to sell their cargoes. Not only was the whale oil valuable as the premiere lubrication and lamp oil but whalebone was worth as much as \$5 for a pound in eastern markets. It really wasn't bone but rather the filter-feeding baleen that was prized. You may know that the baleen was used in corsets but the most remunerative use for whalebone was in the manufacture of fine silk garments. When the fibers were pulled apart the springy filaments were added to silk which gave it an elasticity it otherwise lacked. In San Francisco corsets spent more time off than on a lady and the demand was zero. If the cargo wasn't immediately useful it, and the ships, were abandoned.

Accounts vary but in 1848-49 some 1,100 ships dropped anchor and, as their pumps went silent, quickly sank (leaky wooden ships are said to 'borrow' the waves and are always engaged in sinking) as the crews jumped ship. U.S. naval vessels suffered a similar fate even when the crews were threatened with court marshal. A few ships were winched ashore to help relieve the building shortage and became saloons, hotels and hook houses.



I love the Bubb Grubb Co.



In the 10 years prior to the Gold Rush settlers had been coming overland. The quickest overland path of this tedious crossing was also the toughest as it was straight across the Great Plains and over the Sierra Madre Mountains. The pace was 10 to 12 miles a day with oxen and was favored by the yeoman farmer with his family. When gold was discovered this route brought about half the immigrants. These folks didn't so much rush as shuffle west. Some

caravans used mules which were twice the speed but they were hard to handle and in short supply.

In 5 years over 200,000 people attempted the trip overland and many didn't make it. During the Gold Rush all sorts of tracks were tested. Some parties meandered through Mexico but this was long, American's didn't speak the lingo, and there was the fear of bandits—about like now. The Sante Fe Trail had been established for decades but the last bit from Santa Fe to Los Angeles was pretty iffy and had very little water and scant grass for the livestock.

One could veer up north and come in through Oregon but there the snows hit earlier and you

were 400 miles too far north from where you really intended to be. Indians made folks jumpy but there were few encounters and there were not half a dozen deaths attributed to Indians in 1849. The real executioner was cholera which could end you in as little as 6 hours. Many thousands died from this on the crossing. Inexperience and poor preparation took its toll as well. Many of the immigrants were unused to firearms and there were countless shooting accidents. Cut yourself when gathering firewood and you could die of gangrene. Runaway wagons or a just wrong step were perpetual threats and more than one sojourner became just so much wheel meat. And everyone's heard of the Donner Party which decided to stop for breakfast when they suddenly became snowed in—and made breakfast of each other. In the mountains there was the constant anxiety of grizzly bear attacks but the rattlers in the desert were more likely to do in an inattentive walker. And walk they did. Many walked the entire 1,900 miles from Missouri to California.

These wagon trains commenced with great enthusiasm but as reality set in along the trail with the red man leering from cliff tops—the pianos, anvils, writing desks, wedding dresses, bullet lead and saw mills were forlornly jettisoned by the trail's margin.

One traveler, when asked if it was hard to find the trail in the desert, remarked with solemnity. "All you have to do is follow the grave markers." In one 250 mile stretch there were over a thousand abandoned wagons. Reports filtered back east with mention of bears, Indians, starvation and cannibalism. But still they kept a comin'.

The trip west included not only risks from the scenery trying to kill you but these pilgrims became short tempered and there were a staggering number of homicides, fratricides, suicides—sides of all sorts. The diaries from the road are rife with tales of slit throats, crushed skulls and a menu of methods of being punctured, delimbed, disemboweled and crushed.

Wagon trains competed for forage and water and some were known to have followed falsified road signs leading whole wagon trains into skeleton festooned wastelands.

Returning Argonauts fresh from gold country were said to have 'seen the elephant' in the parlance of the day. This expression dates back to Alexander's conquest of Asia 2,200 years prior. There were elephants you see, in exotic lands—lands dangerous and far from home. California crooked her golden finger beckoning to one and every to come to this exotic, unordinary land.

Enterprising inventors and adventurers dreamed up far more creative ways to get to the west than the conventional routes. A number of explorers redoubled their efforts to find the fabled Northwest Passage somewhere vaguely between Oregon and the North Pole. Global warming has now made this a reality and ships can pass over the top of the continent in the summer.

By far the most ingenious way to get to California was proposed by an inventor named Rufus Porter. Rufus is one of my favorite characters as I sail through the pages of history. Rufus made his mark as a portrait painter in New York in the 1820's. He was quite popular and in solid demand.

But the studio couldn't hold this imaginative fellow for long. Rufus was an inveterate tinkerer and engineer who developed machinery of all sorts. He invented a rotary plow, corn shuckers and windmills. He dreamed up the rotary rifle. He sold the design to Samuel Colt for \$100 which evolved into the famous revolver making Colt wildly rich. In his spare time Rufus also founded *The Scientific American*, the longest continually operating magazine in America.

The sweetest trick of all was his patented Aerial Locomotive. This steam powered dirigible was designed to fly at 100 mph and a ticket would cost \$50. The route was from New York City to Sacramento and was scheduled to take 3 days. Travel would be conducted only during the day and the 600 foot vessel would drop a ship anchor at night so the crew could descend and cut

THE BEST ROUTE TO THE CALIFORNIA GOLD!

To Be In Operation
The 1st Of April, 1849

THE AERIAL LOCOMOTIVE

R. PORTER & CO. (Office, Room No. 40 in the Sun Building, New York) are making active progress in the construction of an Aerial Transport, for the express purpose of carrying passengers between New York & California.

It is expected to put this machine in operation about the 1st of April, 1849, and the transport is expected to make a trip to the gold region and back in seven days. The price of passage is \$50, including board. Books open for subscribers as above.

Skies To Be Filled With Aerial Locomotives!

It may be anticipated that within a few months these aerial machines may be soaring in various directions and at different elevations, some apparently among or above the clouds; and others, like swallows, sailing leisurely just above the surface of the earth... out over rich fields of broom and grain. Travelers soon will find themselves waving and conversing by the way with merry farmers.

CONTACT AS NOTED
R. PORTER & COMPANY

firewood to stoke the furnaces for the boilers powering a pair of steam engines which turned giant 'air spindles.' These slowly turning spindles became the high speed propellers of later aircraft. Rufus had a finished design and even built a small working model with a spring-wound motor to demonstrate the effect. He flew it for investors in the late 1840s. They invested. Then he built a 240 foot model and it flew, sort of.

He estimated that the full sized machine would weigh a total of 14,000 pounds and would generate a total lift of 56,000 pounds—leaving 42,000 pounds for 200 passengers and luggage. Passengers were assured that they were in little danger, but to allay fears each was to be provided with a parachute. The gas filled aircraft was to be constructed of a spruce framework covered with cloth and coated with India rubber.

Rufus' demonstration ship was mobbed by enthusiastic onlookers who got too close at the grand hall in the Chicago Mercantile. They gashed a hole in the envelope so it collapsed before takeoff. He was working on a third ship when the money gave out.

The principle impediment to this scheme was that the full sized airship could not be built with the technology available at the time. Many of Rufus' calculations were wide of the mark such as the 8 foot diameter parachute. This is actually the right size if the air doesn't spill. But it does.

Just some crazy scheme by a charlatan right? Well Rufus was actually a major figure in his day and he did attract a good deal of attention. 60 years after Rufus gave up his plan Count Von Zeppelin came up with a design that could have made the trip and done it nonstop. Ironically the Colt revolver had much more of an impact on the opening of the West than his airship did.

I'll bet Bayard Taylor would have been on Rufus' ship had it flown. You may recall the directive issued by the editor of the New York Herald, Horace Greeley, to "Go west young man." Well, the man he sent west was Bayard Taylor, a journalist who recounts the hilarious and stirring tale of his trip to the Gold Country and his adventures on the California coast. Bayard gives a faithful account of the death defying transit of the Isthmus of Panama as he was one of the first to make the voyage from the east and take passage on the Pacific side to San Francisco.

Bayard hiked to the diggings but didn't find any gold so he went back to San Francisco. Then on a whim he walked to Monterey where he participated in the creation of the California Constitution. He then strolled on back up to San Francisco and determined it was time to return to Manhattan with his report. But this proved to be a bit difficult.

His book *Eldorado* is that report. Of the many books I've read about the Gold Rush none comes close to the most excellent style and whimsical wordcraft Bayard employs. He was a well respected writer in his day and I commend the book most heartily. It's worth a long quote about his rollicous attempt to shove off from San Francisco.

From Eldorado

Rather than wait for the steamer of January 1st (1849), I decided to take one of the sailing packets for Mazatlan, as the trip down the coast is usually made in from ten to fifteen days. The most promising chance was that of a Peruvian brigantine belonging to a German house, which I was assured would sail on the 15th of December. A heavy gale coming up at the time put this out of the question. I waited until the 18th, when I went on board, determined to set foot no more in San Franciscan mud. The brigantine which bore the name of Iquiquena, from the Peruvian



port of Iquiqua was a small, rakish craft, built at the island of Chile for a smuggler in the opium trade; having been afterwards purchased by a house in Callao, she still retained the Peruvian colors. In her low, confined cabin, containing eight berths, which were reached by a dark and crooked well opening on the deck near the rudder, seven passengers were crowded Americans,

Mexicans, and Venezuelans besides the captain, mate, supercargo, and steward, who were Germans, as were likewise the greater part of the crew. To complete the circle that met around our little table to discuss the invariable daily dinner of rice soup and boiled beef, I must not omit mentioning a Chinese dog, as eccentric in his behavior as the Celestials on shore. The captain and crew did nothing to falsify the national reputation for tardiness and delay. Seven days were we doomed to spend in the bay before the almost hopeless conjunction of wind, tide, crew, passengers, and vessel started us from our anchorage. On getting aboard, the captain declared everything to be in readiness except the wood and water, which would be forthcoming next day. Having some experience of German deliberation, I at once resigned myself to three days delay. The next day was stormy and rough; on the second, two casks of water were brought on board; the third was stormy; the wood was purchased on the fourth; and on the fifth the sailors quarreled about their pay and refused to go to sea. While we thus lay in the harbor, just inside the Rincon, trying to bear with patience a delay so vexatious, one of the terrible southeast gales came on. The wind gradually rose through the night, and its violence was heard and felt in the whistle of the rigging and the uneasy roll of our brigantine. When morning dawned, the sky was as gray and cold as an arch of granite, except towards the southeast, where a streak of dun light seemed like the opening through which the whole fury of the blast was poured upon the bay. The timbers of the shipping creaked as the lashed and driven waters tossed them about; the rigging hummed and roared till the ropes were ready to snap with the violence of their vibrations. There was little rain accompanying the gale, but every drop stung like a shot. Seen under a sky and through an atmosphere from which all sensation of light and warmth was gone, the town and hills of San Francisco appeared as if cast in bronze, so cold, dark, and severe were their outlines. The blackest thunder-gusts I ever saw had nothing so savage and relentless in their expression. All day and

night, having dragged our anchor and drifted on the shoals, we lay thumping heavily with every swell, while a large barque, with three anchors out, threatened to stave in our bows. Towards morning the rain increased, and in the same proportion the gale abated. During its prevalence five or six vessels were injured, and two or three entirely lost. The sailors having been pacified, the supercargo taken on board, and the brig declared ready for sea, we were detained another day on account of the anchor sticking fast in the mud, and still another through lack of a favorable wind. Finally, on the eighth day after going on board, the brig was warped (walked with ropes by setting anchors) through the crowded vessels and took the first of the ebb tide, with a light



breeze, to run out of the harbor. I went on deck, in the misty daybreak, to take a parting look at the town and its amphitheatric hills. As I turned my face shoreward, a little spark appeared through the fog. Suddenly it shot up into a spiry flame, and at the same instant I heard the sound of gongs, bells, and trumpets and the shouting of human voices. The calamity predicted and dreaded so long in advance that men ceased to think of it, had come at last. San Francisco was on fire! The blaze increased with fearful rapidity. In fifteen minutes it had risen into a broad, flickering column, making all the shore, the misty air, and the wa-

ter ruddy as with another sunrise. The sides of new frame houses, scattered through the town, tents high up on the hills, and the hulls and listless sails of vessels in the bay gleamed and sparkled in the thick atmosphere. Meanwhile the roar and tumult swelled, and above the clang of gongs and the cries of the populace I could hear the crackling of blazing timbers, and the smothered sound of falling roofs. I climbed into the rigging and watched the progress of the conflagration. As the flames leaped upon a new dwelling, there was a sudden whirl of their waving volumes an embracing of the frail walls in their relentless clasp and, a second afterwards, from roof and rafter and foundation-beam shot upward a jet of fire, steady and intense at first, but surging off into spiral folds and streamers as the timbers were parted and fell. For more than an hour, while we were tacking in the channel between Yerba Buena Island and the anchorage, there was no apparent check to the flames. Before passing Fort Montgomery, however, we heard several explosions in quick succession, and conjectured that vigorous measures had been taken to prevent further destruction. When at last, with a fair breeze and bright sky, we were dashing past the rock of Alcatraz, the red column had sunk away to a smoldering blaze, and nothing but a heavy canopy of smoke remained to tell the extent of the conflagration. The Golden Gate was again before us, and I looked through its mountain walls on the rolling Pacific, with full as pleasant an excitement as I had looked inwards, four months before, eager to catch the first glimpse of the new Eldorado. The breeze freshened, the swell increased, and as the breakers of the entrance receded

behind us, we entered the rough sea left by a recent gale. In trying to haul close to the wind, the captain discovered that the rudder was broken. Immediately afterwards there was a cry of "a leak!" and from the terror on the faces of the mate and sailors, I thought that nothing less than a dozen blankets could stop the opening. The pumps were rigged in haste, but little water was found in the hold, and on examination it appeared that the leak, which was in the bow, was caused by the springing apart of the planking from a violent blow on the rocks which the brig had received a short time previous. The captain decided at once to return, much to our disappointment, as the wind was fair for Mazatlan. We were twenty miles from the entrance, and after beating up until next morning found ourselves just as far off as ever. The wind continuing fair, the captain at length listened to us, and turned again towards Mazatlan. A change of wind again changed his mind, and all that day and the next we tacked back and forth sometimes running out towards the Farallones, sometimes close under the lee of the Punta de Los Reyes, and again driven down the coast as far, on the other side of the entrance. What our brig gained in tacking, she lost in leeway, and as the rudder hung by a single pintle, she minded her helm badly. On the afternoon of the third day we were becalmed, but drifted into the entrance of the Gate with the flood tide, in company with fifteen vessels that had been waiting outside. A light southern breeze springing up enabled us to reach the anchorage west of Clark's Point in the night; so that next morning, after landing on the beach and walking through a mile of deep mud, I was once more in San Francisco. I hastened immediately to Portsmouth Square, the scene of the conflagration. All its eastern front, with the exception of the Delmonico Restaurant at the corner of Clay Street, was gone, together with the entire side of the block on Washington Street. The Eldorado, Parker House, Denison's Exchange, and the United States Coffee House forming, collectively, the great rendezvous of the city, where everybody could be found at some time of the day were among the things that had been. The fronts of the Verandah, Aguila de Oro, and other hells on Washington Street were blackened and charred from the intense heat to which they were subjected, and from many of the buildings still hung the blankets by means of which they were saved. Three days only had elapsed since the fire, yet in that time all the rubbish had been cleared away, and the frames of several houses were half raised. All over the burnt space sounded one incessant tumult of hammers, axes, and saws. In one week after the fire the Eldorado and Denison's Exchange stood completely roofed and weatherboarded, and would soon be ready for occupation. The Parker House was to be rebuilt of brick, and the timbers of the basement floor were already laid. The Exchange had been contracted for at \$15,000, to be finished in two weeks, under penalty of forfeiting \$150 for every additional day. In three weeks from the date of the fire, it was calculated that new ones, of better construction, would replace all the buildings destroyed. The loss by the conflagration was estimated at \$1,500,000 an immense sum, when the number and character of the buildings destroyed is considered. This did not include the loss in a business way, which was probably \$500,000 more. The general business of the place, however, had not been injured. The smaller gambling-hells around and near Portsmouth Square were doing a good business, now that the headquarters of the profession were destroyed. Notwithstanding there was no air stirring at the time, the progress of the fire, as described by those who were on the spot, had something terrific in its character. The canvas partitions of rooms shriveled away like paper in the breath of the flames, and the dry, resinous wood of the outer walls radiated a heat so intense that houses at some distance were obliged to be kept wet to prevent their ignition. Nothing but the prompt measures of the city authorities and a plentiful supply of blankets in the adjacent stores saved all

the lower part of the city from being swept away. The houses in the path of the flames were either blown up or felled like trees, by cutting off the ground timbers with axes and pulling over the structure with ropes fastened to the roof. The Spanish merchants on Washington Street, and others living in adobe houses in the rear, were completely stupefied by the danger, and refused to have their buildings blown up. No one listened to them, and five minutes afterwards adobes, timbers, and merchandise went into the air together. A very few persons, out of the thousands present, did the work of arresting the flames. At the time of the most extreme danger, hundreds of idle spectators refused to lend a hand unless they were paid enormous wages. One of the principal merchants, I was told, offered a dollar a bucket for water, and made use of several thousand buckets in saving his property. All the owners of property worked incessantly, and were aided by their friends, but at least five thousand spectators stood idle in the plaza. I hope their selfish indifference is not a necessary offshoot of society here. It is not to be disputed. However, that constant familiarity with the shifting of Fortune between her farthest extremes blunts very much the sympathies of the popular heart. The German house of whom I had obtained a passage for Mazatlan was burned out, but the supercargo soon discovered its whereabouts. A committee of sea captains appointed to examine the brigantine reported that she could be made ready for sea in three or four days. Under these circumstances, the owners refused to refund more than half the passage-money, which was \$75, to those of us who chose to leave the vessel. My time was now growing precious, and I had no doubt the three days spoken of would be extended to as many weeks. I therefore went to the office of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, where, as I expected, every ticket had been taken weeks before, and neither love, money, nor entreaty seemed likely to procure one. Mr. Robinson, the agent, however, with a prompt kindness I shall not soon forget, gave me a passage to Mazatlan, with the understanding that I would have no berth and probably little sleeping room. The steamer was to sail on the 1st of January, at daybreak. After coming upon my friends like an apparition they having supposed me to be far out at sea I spent two days on shore, housed up from rain and mud, and finally took a boat for the steamer on the last evening of the year 1849. It was during the prevalence of the spring tides, and no boat could be had to go from the Long Wharf to the anchorage off the Rincon for less than \$4. I had two oarsmen for myself and blankets; it was near the middle of the ebb tide, and we ran inside the shelter of the point till we were abreast of the steamer. She was now about three quarters of a mile distant, but a foaming, raging flood was between us. Several large boats, manned by four and six oarsmen, were struggling in the midst of the current, and borne away in spite of themselves. One of my men was discouraged, and wanted to turn back, but there was a majority against him. I took good hold of the tiller-ropes, the men stripped to their flannel shirts, planted their feet firmly against the ribs of the boat, and we dashed into the teeth of the tide. We were thrown and tossed about like a toy; the spray flew over us, and the strongest efforts of the men did not seem to move us an inch. After half an hour of hard work, during which we continually lost ground, we came alongside of a vessel and made fast. At least a dozen other craft could be seen struggling out after us, but they all fell away, some of them drifting two or three miles before they could make a halt. We lay for nearly two hours, waiting for the height of the ebb to pass, but the flood still foamed and rushed, dashing against the prows of vessels and boiling around their sterns, with an incessant roar. At last, another boat with two passengers came down upon us in the darkness; we joined crews leaving one of the boats behind, and set out again with four oars. It was pitchy dark, with a rain dashing in our faces. We kept on, towards the light of the steamer, gaining about a yard a minute,

till we reached her lee gangway. I unrolled my blankets and put in a pre-emption claim for one end of the cabin table. Several other berthless persons occupied the benches on either hand and the iron grating below, which printed their sides like a checkerboard; and so we passed the night. The last boatloads came out in the morning; the parting gun echoed back from the island of Yerba Buena; the paddles moved; San Francisco slid away from us, and the Golden Gate opened again; the swells of the Pacific rolled forward to meet us; the coast wheeled around and fronted our larboard side; rain and fog were behind us, and a speck of clear blue far ahead and so we sped southward, to the tropics, and homeward! The Oregon's freight, both of gold and passengers, was the most important which had ever left San Francisco. Of the former, we had about two millions of dollars on board; of the latter, the Congressmen and Senators elect and Colonel Fremont.

In his book Bayard recounts the challenge of moving through the mud slicked winter roads and of the strangling dust storms in the summer. In the early days if you spent the night in a rooming house or even a hotel you might end up sharing a sagging sawdust mattress with a couple of dicey strangers. The chroniclers of the time often lament with bitterness the terrible flea, lice and bedbug scourge that made staying in public houses such a misery.

Bayard's description of the life and times of the citizens of San Francisco in 1849 has no equal. He tells us how the miner really did pay for their women and drink with pinches of gold dust and that after everyone had gone home or passed out the saloon keepers would sweep the floors out into the street. The few kids who lived in town would hang out in front of these places and, using a tongue-wetted stick, mine the tiny nuggets from the thoroughfare clearing as much as 5 dollars a day.

I have heard it said that there was so little available labor in the first year of the Gold Rush that shirts would be sent to China to be laundered. 5 months to wait for an ironed shirt? This seems improbable but according to Bayard he saw it for himself. He reports that the shirts were laundered for \$15 for a dozen. This laundry circuit is said to have spawned the Chinese laundry industry in San Francisco.

I once asked the California state historian, Kevin Starr, if this could possibly be true and he said yes. I think he was taken in by the tall tale, as was Bayard. Who had a dozen shirts, in need of laundering and could plan for 5 into the uncertain future in the midst of a gold frenzy? Did miners really lust for a well-pressed shirt? Plus, you would need a good many more than a dozen while most were sailing to Hong Kong. Next, someone will claim to have dynamited a whale.

Because of the Gold Rush there were quite a few Chinese folks around (as many as 10% of the people in Northern California in 1851). By the time the railroads came out west there was a labor shortage that led to ever greater migration from China and as a result there is a big population of Chinese Americans there today.

It's true that the first Chinese laundry in the New World was in San Francisco. The whole 'Chinese laundry' thing started there in 1851 so I guess gold miners did want a few clean shirts.

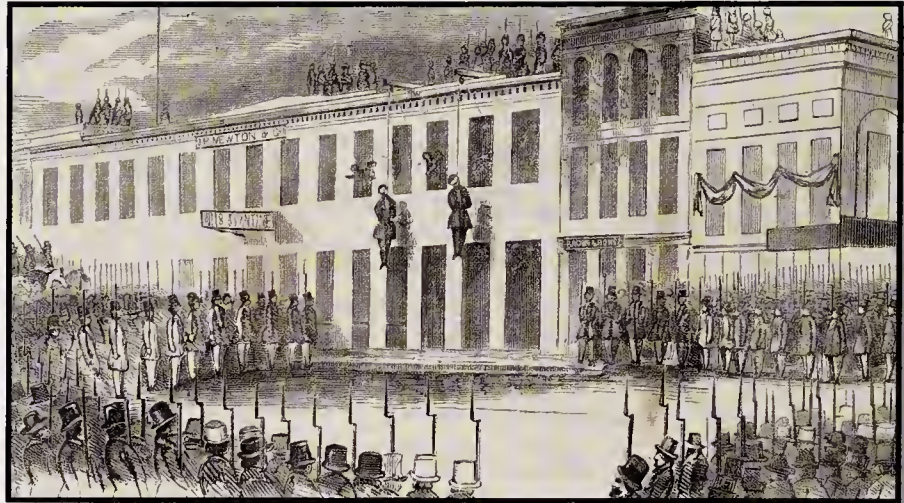
In 1849 San Francisco was a golden egg about to hatch and hatch it did. In the 3 years after gold was discovered a half a billion dollars was added to the economy. The GDP of the U.S. in 1849 was about 2.5 billion. Nothing has ever come close to this flood of capital. Silicon Valley's explosion in the 1990s was a distant second. But unlike the Silicon Valley gold rush the 19th century Gold Rush was pure capital. This is very different from goods and services because gold is instant, fully realized money and as with the gold that flowed to Spain for hundreds of years, this helped launch the United States onto the world stage.*

* Prior to the Gold Rush of 1849 finding gold wasn't a systematic affair but so much was learned from the pursuit of gold in the Sierras that it spurred prospecting all over the planet. More gold was discovered in 20 years than the previous 350 and this fueled worldwide prosperity.

The influx of opportunists to the boomtown of San Francisco led to a lawlessness unparalleled in any other city in the Americas. San Franciscans found this criminality tiresome so in 1851 a posse formed called The Committee of Vigilance. The Vigilantes (this was the origin of this expression) was an organized group of businessmen who seized the reins of power from the noodle-spined city government to put a stop to the shenanigans (another Gold Rush expression) by rounding up lawbreakers and corrupt politicians and running them out of town. If they failed to take off they tied the miscreants to the business end of a rope. After about a year, and 8 hangings and hundreds of banishments later, the Vigilantes felt they had made their point and they turned control back over to the city fathers. San Francisco continued to have a rather frolicsome nature and a freewheeling atmosphere is still pervasive to this day.

San Francisco has always been a place to ahhh... hookup. Of course now it's bars and the internet. But in the 19th Century it was the home to more whorehouses than any

other city in the world. Maiden Lane, now a tony shopping street, came by its name honestly as the location of many houses of pleasure including the Nymphia Hotel. Opened in 1899 it was originally called Hotel Nymphomaniac but the police nixed the moniker and they trimmed the name a tad. The management claimed to have 300 nymphomaniacs in their employ so the point



was clear enough. That's one heckofalota nymphomaniacs. The hotel had coin operated viewing booths to look in on the action in some of the rooms.

There were 'fancy houses' of all kinds from those in Chinatown where the women were defacto slaves to the ones in the business district where the women made a good living. Some of the madams eventually became wealthy businesswomen. When these joints were finally shut down (more or less) for good in the 1950s one enterprising madam, Sally Stanford, became a hotelier and mayor of Sausalito.



*Your typical nymphomaniac 6-pack circa 1850
(Who isn't a sucker for a girl in a serape?)*

Shanghaiing

Even though California was admitted to the Union as a free state in 1850 slavery of a sort was practiced as soon as the Gold Rush died down in the 1850s. It was centered in San Francisco and for a change most of those enslaved were white men. San Francisco bustled as the go-to port on the coast from pole to pole at the time when Los Angeles was a dusty backwater.

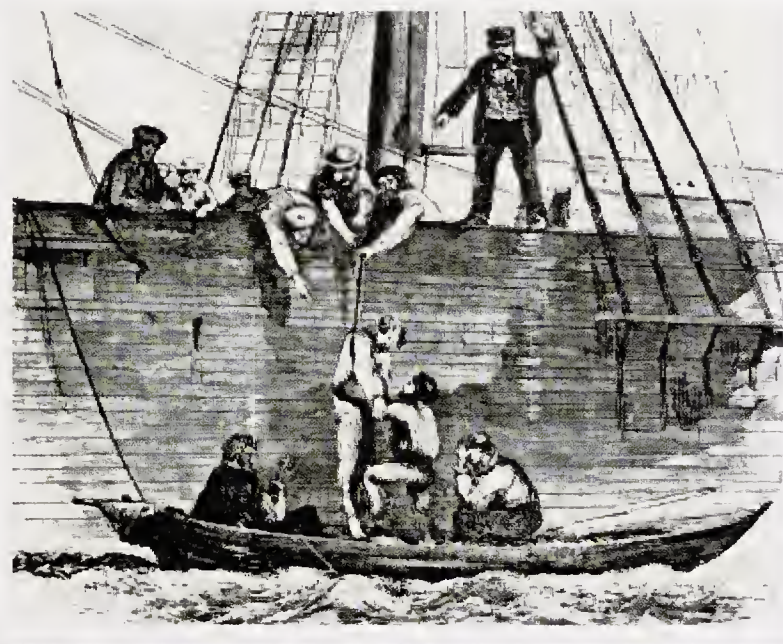
As commerce boomed the need for men to crew ships became dire and desperate times encouraged unscrupulous ship captains to be...creative. The labor shortage was answered by crimps who plied the saloons and boarding houses capturing hapless country lads, busted argonauts and sailors in from a long voyage. Many were amazed at the friendliness of the barkeepers who stood them for free drinks and gave them a place to stay out of pure San Francisco generosity. The difficulties arose when the opium laced moonshine made the men fall face first through a hatch in the floor to waiting whitehaulers. The unfortunates were then rowed out to waiting ships and sold for as little as \$10 or as much as \$75.

A notorious barkeep/madam/shanghaier, Chloroform Kate, had the neat trick of sewing rats into the sawdust filled sleeves of a dummy thereby animating the supposed victim enough to sell it to an eager ship captain.

The whitehaulers were the backbone of the waterfront. These 20 foot skiffs, and men by the same name, were called for the boat's designer and they plied the waterfront moving personnel both legitimate—sitting up, or unconscious—under a tarp, as well as above board cargo and contraband. They also saved people who had fallen in the bay. In the beginning there was a procedural problem that had to be ironed out. Initially the city paid \$10 if you fished a corpse out of the water but only \$5 if you saved a drowning man. The boatmen were less inspired to save the living with the first scheme.

Shanghaiing (another word of San Francisco invention) was a big business. Men were seized from ships in the bay and sold to other ships, they were kidnapped from their hotel beds or tricked with ads reading "Come on a South Sea cruise as the captain's steward. Good pay and light work." The reality could be a two year voyage of hard labor as a deck hand at the end of which you could end up back in San Francisco. There you might be immediately cheated out of your wages then knocked out and sold once again. A hotel was even built for the advertised purpose of housing itinerant seaman but it was actually an involuntary recruitment center. Thousands were sent back to sea against their will. The practice lasted in one form or another until the early 1920s.

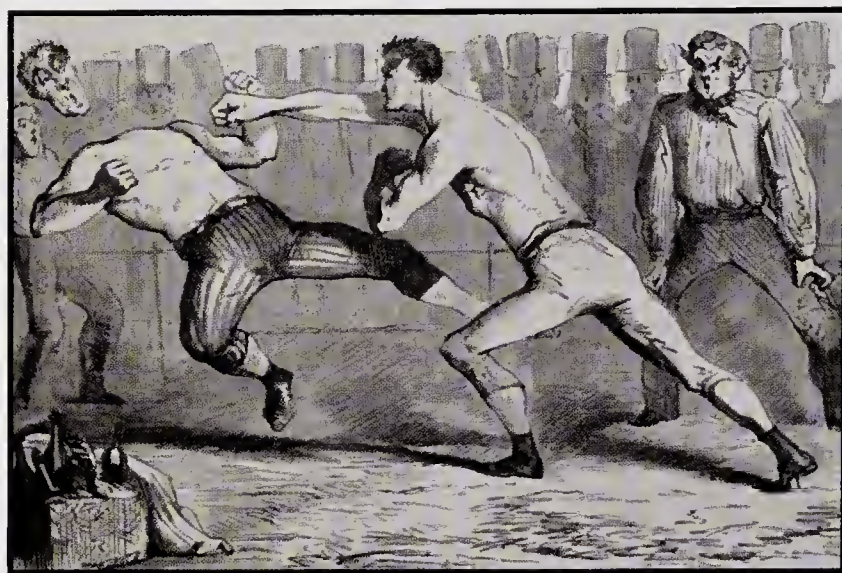
These sailors and miners were a swashbuckling crowd. Organized (barely) bare-knuckle fights were the rage. Some went over 100 rounds and more than one pugilist never recovered. The waterfront was such a tough place it became known as the Barbary Coast and is named for a rough stretch of pirate-infested water off North Africa (the U.S. Navy was established to quell the Barbary Coast pirates of old and the Marines memorialized the effort by referring to "The shores of Tripoli").



A contemporary San Francisco description reads, “The Barbary Coast is the haunt of the low and the vile of every kind. The petty thief, the house burglar, the tramp, the whoremonger, lewd women, cutthroats, murderers, all are found here. Dance-halls and concert-saloons, where foggy-eyed men and faded women drink vile liquor, smoke offensive tobacco, engage in vulgar conduct, sing obscene songs and say and do everything to heap upon themselves more degradation, are numerous. Low gambling houses, thronged with riot-loving rowdies, in all stages of intoxication, are there. Opium dens, where heathen Chinese and God-forsaken men and women are sprawled in miscellaneous confusion, disgustingly drowsy or completely overcome are they. Licentiousness, debauchery, pollution, loathsome disease, insanity from dissipation, misery, poverty, wealth, profanity, blasphemy, and death, are there. And Hell, yawning to receive the putrid mass, is there also.” Sounds like a fun place to visit and in fact I did — as this is an apt description of North Beach in the 1970s.

The far west end of San Francisco became quite the tourist mecca starting with the construction of the Cliff House Restaurant and Hotel in 1858. Sam Brannon built the first incarnation of this building out of wood salvaged from a wrecked schooner. In 1863 it was rebuilt in Victorian wedding cake style and stood until the dark and stormy night of January 16, 1887 when another ship (of many) piled onto the rocks below. The ship was just below the building and someone remarked that if it were loaded with TNT it could go **kablooey!** It was and it did.

Then in 1896 Adolph Sutro (he had made a fortune in the gold mining region with his advanced ventilation engineering) built the iconic 7 story gingerbread Victorian which made it through the



“That’s gonna leave a mark”

earthquake only to burn down the next year in a kitchen fire. The 5th edition of the Cliff House is a pale shadow of this once imposing edifice.

From 1896 to 1950s the biggest bathhouse complex the world has ever known was continually expanding adjacent to the Cliff House. Sutro Baths was an aggregation of aircraft hanger-sized buildings enclosing 7 Brobdingnagian pools of various temperatures and salinity. A concert hall on the premises could accommodate 8,000 and there was a museum of Sutro’s odd and wonderful collection of artifacts. The entire facility could hold 25,000 people at once and was served by its own rail line, as it was then 12 miles



“There goes my dinner reservation.”



The current Cliff House, Sutros, and the wreck of the day in the 1960s

Mooneysville-by-the-Sea then Shoots the Chutes, and later Chutes at the Beach. You could shoot the rapids or you could shoot guns at one of the many shooting galleries where the ammunition was very real. In the 1960s junkies used the abandoned park as another kind of shooting gallery.

In its heyday one of the popular restaurants at Playland was called Topsy's Roost. This was a vast restaurant where you sat in mock chicken coops, eating fried chicken. I would love to have seen Topsy's. Today this once highly amusing stretch of beach is trafficked by neophyte surfers, bored dog walkers and beige condos.

San Francisco had other amusement parks in times gone by like Woodward Gardens at Valencia and 15th. They had camel rides and in 1866 featured an 8 foot Chinese man.

San Francisco experimented with various industries that seem pretty quirky now. Today in Silicon Valley entrepreneurs try all sorts of things with computers like making different smells when you type in certain words. So the place isn't new to ideas that don't pan out (*pan out* being another gold mining term). One of the schemes launched in San Francisco was silk manufacturing. This is a complicated process which entailed importing silk worms from Japan and planting

from town. In 1966 the petals had withered on this rose and the whole affair burned to the ground a few days before its scheduled demolition.

Playland right next door lasted a little longer but these seaside carnivals were doomed by more alluring pastimes that came along in the 60s like sex, drugs and rock and roll (the Devil's music) all of which they tried to incorporate into the disintegrating Playland. This carnival had begun in earnest in 1890 and was originally called





ermen who worked them, these boats were designed with endless variations and became the backbone of the fishing industry which was a vital chunk of the economy when fish was a more important part of the coastal diet than it is today.

The White Elephant Fleet (AKA the Emergency Fleet Corporation) was an armada of 1,000 merchant ships ordered early in the First World War. It seems that after the German's had sunk 122 American ships in the first two weeks of the war we decided to double down and build new ships faster than they could be torpedoed. The problem was there wasn't enough steel in play so the new ships were to be built of Douglas fir and sugar pine from the Pacific Coast. These were 285 foot steam ships all of a standard design. So far so good.

But one of the problems with rushing wooden ships is that the lumber tends to be wet and shrinks after assembly. Not only that but these ships were never big enough to haul very much and oh, the war ended. But they kept on a comin down the launchways. Hundreds were built and many went into service doing, well, nothing because after the war there was a world wide shipping glut. Somewhere around a billion was spent in 1918 dollars (the Panama Canal cost \$750 million)

At one point the U.S. government tried to give the fleet to Uruguay but the South Americans

didn't need wet firewood even for free. In that the war had been in the Atlantic most of the ships ended up on the eastern seaboard where the fleet was sold at auction for \$175,000. The idea was to salvage the engines and other usable parts and then burn the ships for the remaining metal. Just then ships were converting to diesel so huge steam engines were in-

hundreds of acres of mulberry trees to feed the worms. It quickly became evident that the silk from China was cheaper, as it still is today.

Other endeavors had varying degrees of success. In the 19th century and well into the 20th shipbuilding on the coast was an important. It took many forms from the hundreds of Monterey fishing boats to freighters and warships.

The Monterey fishing boats were built in small boatyards from Monterey to Sacramento. Often nailed up on the beach by the fish-



Monterey fishing boat



Part of the fleet in Seattle



They did look a lot like real ships

called 'river arks' floated in and what with the local military base at Quantico the whole place took on a pretty festive air. This went on for 6 years. Some party.

Once all the usable tackle was removed the whores drifted off, the soldiers went back to base and the entire fleet was torched over the objections of the local fishermen who claimed that burning hundreds of ships would kill all the fish. It did.

Today we aren't so foolish and the U.S. military would never waste money so injudiciously.

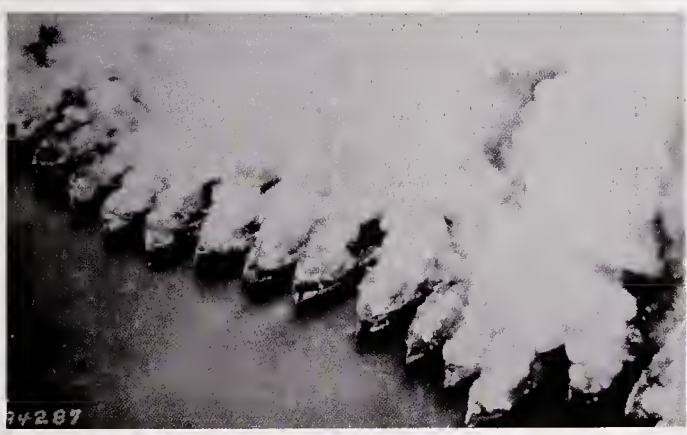
One enterprise that did work out in San Francisco was The Palace Hotel. At over 800 rooms it was the biggest hotel in the world in 1890. It's sometimes remembered as the place where celebrities died. King Kamehameha died in room 672. President Warren G. Harding went to that big

cabinet meeting in the sky from The Palace just ahead of his impeachment over Teapot Dome. Enrico Caruso didn't die there but he was in residence during the 1906 earthquake. He had

performed as *Figaro* at the Opera House the night before and he with the other guests of the Palace spilled onto Market in the early morning. The famous tenor was panicked by the collapsed buildings and fires springing up in all quarters. Enrico went to the Ferry Terminal and attempted to board an already overloaded ship bound for Sausalito. He yelled to let him aboard. After all he was Enrico Caruso the world's greatest tenor! "Ya right, and Bob's your Uncle." "No, I am *he*!" And with that he burst into song. The startled boatman let him aboard.

stantly no longer in vogue, driving the preposterous adventure further onto the rocks.

Eventually, 235 of the ships were towed to a ship graveyard on the Potomac just below Washington D.C. and salvaging began. It was immediately apparent it wasn't worth the effort so the salvage company walked away. It's now 1924 and itinerant salvagers moved in, set up camps and began stripping the ships. Since it was Prohibition, dozens of stills sprung up and houseboat brothels



The earthquake really got everyone's attention. But as bad as the earthquake was the resulting fire was worse. One good thing about an earthquake is that it is a very effective method of urban renewal even if it's somewhat hard on the crockery.



The Palace in 1905

It happened on April 18th 1906 at 5:12am. 490 blocks, 28,000 buildings 450 people dead and 225,000 looking for a rental.

For many years the survivors would gather at Lotta's Fountain on Market on April 18th at the same time to commemorate the devastation. I was at one of these jamborees and was treated to the refrain "I left my heart in San Francisco" over and over and over until even the survivors drifted off. The mayor always shows up and reminds you to stock water and can-

dles. People who don't live in California are very concerned about the fact that we live in such a dangerous place. With the first experience of an earthquake they run into a doorway or dive under a table. We seasoned veterans laugh right in the face of adversity and dare it to come and get us.

In 1989 it did just that and dozens of people were killed in that one. Part of the Bay Bridge fell in and a freeway collapsed. We built a new bridge in just 24 short years.



1906



1989

James Lick

One San Franciscan who wanted do his part to remodel the city was James Lick. I love the story of James Lick. His magnificent plan was overruled and we have been paying for it in San Francisco ever since. Jimmy was born in Stumpstown, Pennsylvania and it was there that he learned to build pianos (every boy's dream). Presumably he built these pianos out of the trees

from which the stumps were the result. As sometimes happens he got a girl in the family-way and did the honorable thing by going to her father, a prominent mill owner, and asked for her hand, both hands really, in marriage. After a severe thrumping with a pick handle and a threat of worse, Jim thought that a change of atmosphere and even hemisphere would be a good idea.

Jim knew that many of the pianos were being shipped to Argentina so despite the lure of cosmopolitan Stumpstown off he went in 1821 to Buenos Aires where he discovered to his dismay that they didn't speak English. Amazingly he made a pretty good living building a variety of spinets and grands and took a trip to Europe to celebrate. Coming back he was captured by the Portuguese and became a prisoner of war even though the U.S. wasn't at war with Portugal. He didn't speak Portuguese either. Jim escaped and had the good sense to hightail it to Chile where the political climate allowed for construction of pianos in peace. Chile had a vibrant economy rivaling that of America at the time but still they spoke only Spanish to Jim's continual chagrin. So he up-staked to Peru and still managed to produce and sell pianos which was wildly profitable. But he never felt at home.

As the Mexican American War was heating up in 1846 he lost his Mexican workers in Peru to military conscription so he decided to try Yerba Buena because he heard that a few folks there spoke English. Yerba Buena was a city of perhaps 600 people in 1846. It soon changed its name to San Francisco. Lick brought his piano making tools, \$30,000 in gold and 600 pounds of chocolate consigned to him by an associate in Peru. The chocolate sold well so he informed his friend, an Italian by way of Lima, Domingo Ghirardelli, that he should come north and go into the candy business. Dom did and made a great success of it.

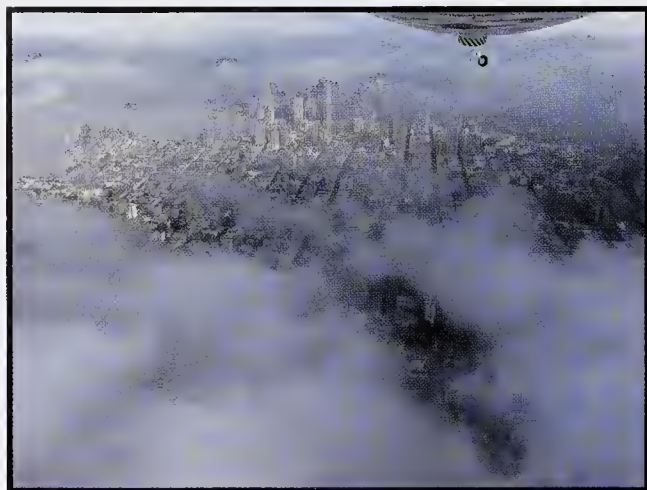
Jim tried his hand at gold mining for a few days but decided that owning land was a better deal than digging in it. But buying and selling land in San Francisco was problematic as the land laws still followed the Spanish procedures in 1848 (California was in a territorial twilight period between the Bear Flag Revolt in 1846 and statehood in 1850) so getting clear title to land was nearly impossible. These laws didn't pertain to lots that were underwater however. So in a scheme still celebrated to this day by slick operators Jim bought lots in the bay, had it filled, and then sold the lots for thousands of times what he had paid for them.* Later he amassed a nifty portfolio of premiere properties such as Lake Tahoe, what is now Hollywood and Catalina. He also held sizable tracts of land in San Jose and much of the property south of Market in San Francisco.

In Santa Clara he built the grandest gristmill in the west using exotic woods from all over the world as well as marble and brass making it look more like a bank than a mill. Having made something of himself he sent for the mill owner's daughter. In your face old man! "Gee, Jim it was 25 years ago," she wrote back. She had long since married and raised a family. This is said to have broken his heart and cast his spirits down to the point where he became that morose millionaire in rumpled old clothes driving a tumbledown carriage pulled by a weezy bag of bones. He was easily the richest man in the west and this in a region of very rich men.

One of his pals was Sarah Winchester, the famous recluse in San Jose with the mystery house. I guess there were no sparks there, as they both remained single.

In spite of his melancholic disposition Jim was surprisingly civic minded and in an attempt to give back to the community he proposed to build three 80 foot statues of himself and his parents as a gift to the city out on a promontory in North Beach. The city fathers were taken aback and someone suggested to Jim that they would make convenient targets should the Russians invade. This was a diminishingly remote possibility but it did cool him to the project.

* As Gold Rush ships were abandoned some enterprising souls planked crude piers to the hulks in the shallows and filling the ships with dirt discovered that the baylands could more conveniently utilized even if title belonged to another.



Without

His penultimate scheme, and this is the one I lament not coming to fruition, was his proposal to erect a stone pyramid as his tomb where Moscone Center is today.

This was to be bigger than the

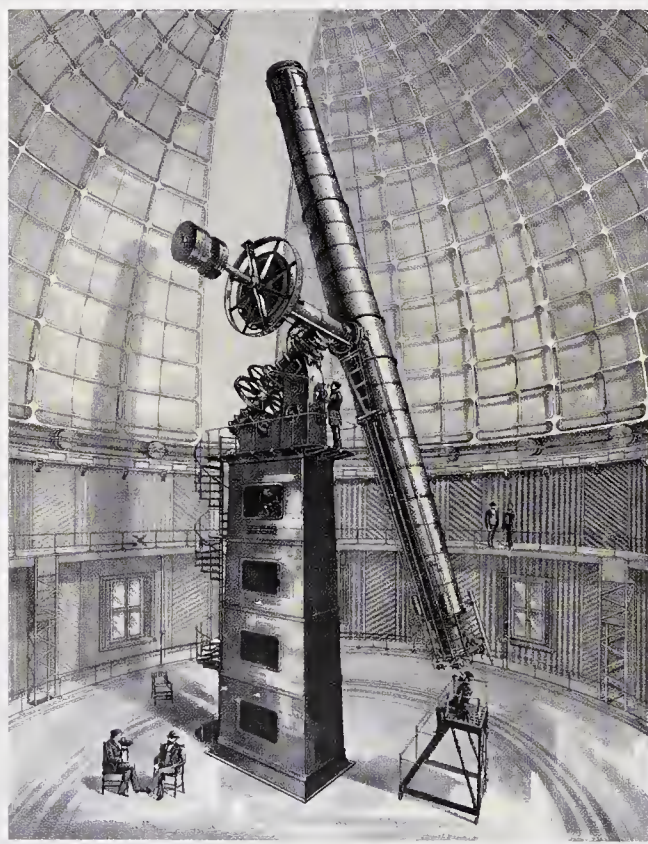
Great Pyramid at Giza. This was no casual fancy as he owned a sizable quarry, the real estate on which to build and he had the money. What a terrific idea! It would have been quite a sight during the 06 earthquake to see 10 ton blocks hurtling down from 500 feet.

Citizens were horrified by the idea of having a gigantic tomb in the middle of the city but as his plans to build the pyramid were moving forward an astronomer suggested that a better memorial would be to construct the world's first major astronomical observatory. He convinced Jim

to build the Lick Observatory on Mt. Hamilton near San Jose. James Lick is buried under the

great telescope.

Now all we have is the puny Transamerica Pyramid—a faint echo of what could have been.



With



The Great Diamond Hoax

In 1872 veteran prospectors and first cousins Philip Arnold and John Slack arrived in San Francisco and went straight to the Bank of California where they deposited a sack full of diamonds and other precious gems in the vault. They said they had personally discovered them and told the banker to tell no one. Then, they checked in to a hotel—and waited.

Somehow, amazingly, the word got out and a group of prominent financiers convinced the reluctant Arnold and Slack to cut them in on the deal. After much pleading the cousins reluctantly offered to take investigators to the mine in Wyoming where they had found the gems. The financiers hired a mining engineer to examine the field and with several others the party boarded a train to a whistle-stop

in the Wyoming wheat fields. For the last few hours of the sojourn the investigators had agreed to be blindfolded and they bounced along in a buckboard into the foothills imagining the great treasure that could be theirs. Finally, after a hard journey through the day and into the twilight, the investigators took off their blindfolds were shocked to see that prairie dogs in fashioning their little mounds had worked gems to the surface—these stones studded the dirt and glittered in the rising full moon. The next morning the flabbergasted partners gathered up the gems and were once more blindfolded and the long trip was reversed.

Tiffany's appraised the gems as being valued at \$150,000. San Francisco went wild. And when the mining engineer made his report, more businessmen clambered to get on board. They included Horace Greeley, George McClellan, William C. Ralston, Baron von Rothschild, Charles Tiffany, and Asbury Hapending (we will encounter him later in an earlier event, stay with me here). Tiffany convinced the cousins to sell their interest for \$660,000 (see the inflation table) and the new partners led by Ralston formed their own mining company. The financiers sent mining engineer Henry Janin, to evaluate the find, and he sent the press wildly optimistic reports. More investors poured in.

Janin determined that the prairie dogs and even the ants had somehow worked the stones to the surface. His report led to a gem rush all over the Rockies. Prospectors were rushing in circles because the gems in this story were the only ones found in America though in the 1900s diamonds were discovered in Arkansas. Gold and gem fever is a funny thing. It seems to flourish on lack of facts and, like mushrooms, grows best in darkness.

At some point a government geologist named Clarence King and two others inspected the unusual field. King had been suspicious from the beginning because the find included rubies, garnets, sapphires and diamonds. There had never been a discovery with this variety of gems anywhere on earth to his certain knowledge. When King arrived at the field he did find gems but he could tell at a glance that the field had been salted. Salting was an old trick in the gold game but no one had heard of it being done with gems. His report said he half expected to find a tiara with the word 'sucker' spelled out in diamonds.

Further investigation revealed that Phil and John bought low grade uncut diamonds and the sweepings from gem cutting rooms in London for \$35,000 and then simply scattered them, working them about the surface with a stick. Of course by this point the hucksters were long gone Phil was last heard from going into a truly crooked business—running a bank in Kentucky.

Ice

We don't give it thought today but ice was a gigantic industry in the 19th century. I am just old enough to remember the iceman in the dusty town of Ojai east of Ventura. Ojai was hopelessly behind the times in the 50s and was one of the last places in America where running behind the truck begging for chips was still practiced even if the neighbor's dog, Cheetah-the-Wolf, chased me down and chewed my face up.

Before refrigeration, ice was worth a great deal more than it is today. The early San Franciscans got their ice from places like Walden Pond in Massachusetts. That's right. Back east in



the winter, teams would cut up pond ice with big whipsaws and move it by wagon to the wharves in Boston, load it in the holds of ships, and mail it 16,000 miles at six and half miles an hour to places like San Francisco, Hawaii and even Australia.

From the highest hills in San Francisco you could see the snow in the Sierras but there was no way to get it to town before it melted. Moving ice by sea was not as crazy as having your shirts pressed in Hong Kong and it actually was quite common to ship ice round the Horn. Ships needed counterweight to keep them upright anyway so they just replaced the ballast rock with ice. Insulated in sawdust and straw, ice could last for over a year with as little as a 25% loss along the way. By 1853 ice was coming in from Alaska and by 1868 ice finally flowed down from Truckee near Lake Tahoe. The Truckee ice trade flourished from 1869 to 1924 with a half a dozen ice companies shipping as much as 3 million tons of ice by rail to San Francisco a year. 3m tons is a

cube of about 450 feet on a side. Of course the cubes were generally smaller. Even if the cubes weren't improbably big the business was. In 1860 ice was the United States' second largest cash commodity behind cotton.

Icehouses across the country were common and because the buildings were large and had high concentrations of cold, they became places where food was stored as well as where ice was sold. In the 1930s many icehouses in

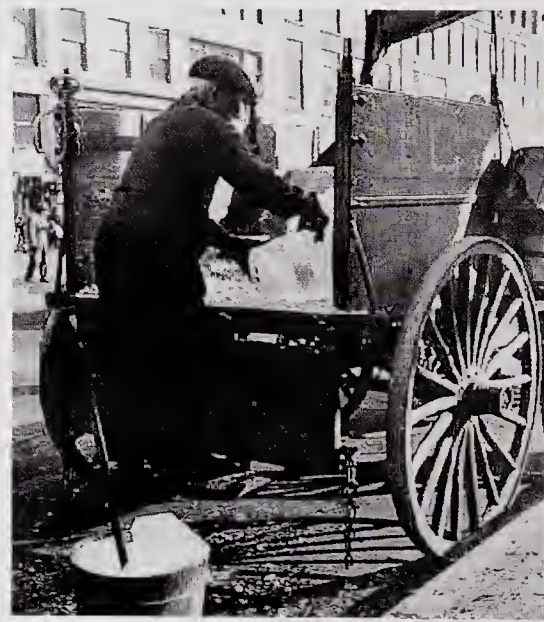


the South were operated by the Southland Ice Manufacturing Company. A retail operation sprung up in these icehouses. The initial plan was to open at 7am and stay open till 11pm, hence 7-Eleven. The parent company is still called the Southland Corp. but is now headquartered in Japan.

If you set all the 37,000 7-Elevens side by side they would stretch from San Francisco to Phoenix. This would be very bad planning and though amusing, probably not much more useful than that big block of ice.

Prior to refrigeration, icing down seafood and fruit then shipping it to St. Louis and Denver was a great way to im-

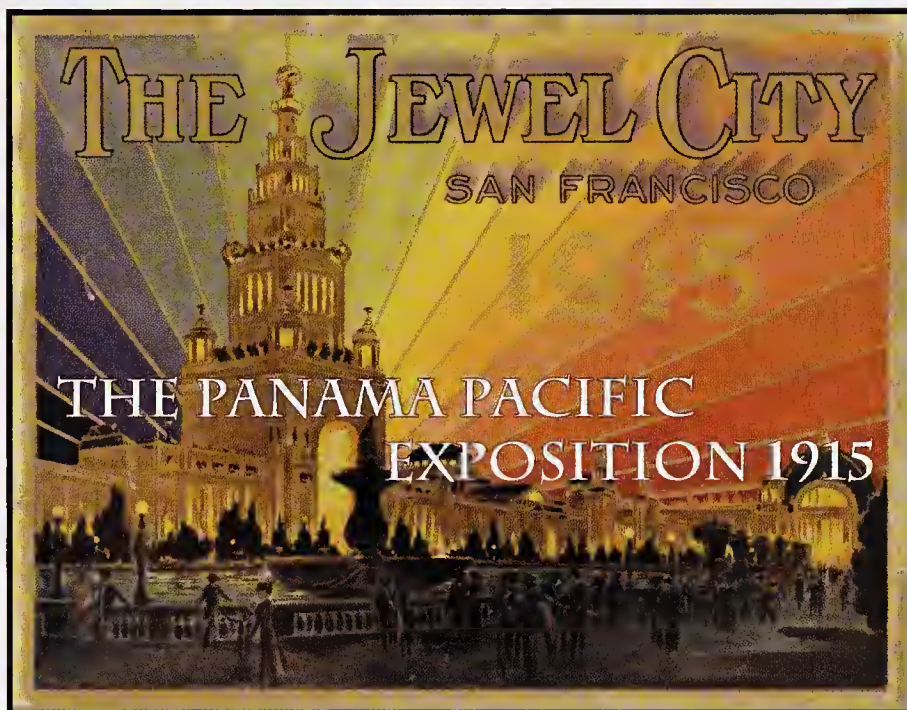
press your friends. Oysters, then as now, were popular because it is one of the only foods regularly eaten that is alive as you consume it. Same deal with clams. With abundant ice, the farms in California began to supply the entire nation with fresh fruit and vegetables.



The Panama Pacific International Exposition

Until the Panama Canal was built all goods manufactured in the east had to come by ship around the Horn or in smaller quantities by rail. Before 1900 most of what went east was food and raw materials. With the opening of the canal the distance from the east coast to the west fell in half. San Francisco decided to celebrate with the Pan Pacific International Exposition in 1915. This was a world's fair modeled on Chicago's Colombia Exhibition of 1893.

The PPIE was remarkable for so many reasons. Here was a temporary city created and built by the top talent of the day. Julia Morgan's mentor, Bernard Maybeck designed the Palace of Fine Arts (the only structure remaining) for the fair. The exposition spanned from that building near the foot of the Golden Gate to Van Ness Avenue and covered over 600 acres. The exposition seemed to spring up from the sand dunes in an instant where previously there had just been shanties and skinny cats. It arrived on time and on budget and ended up turning a huge profit.



Sandwiched between the earthquake, a mere 9 years before, and WW1, the fair was a shimmering example of America at its best. There were 5 acre dioramas depicting the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and a working Panama Canal with miniature trains and ships. There was a weird tableau of The Creation complete with actors playing Adam and Eve even if the snake was rubber. One building had real live babies kept fresh and happy in a newfangled contraption—the incubator.

The literal crown jewel was a 435 foot tall steel tower of 102,000 gem faceted pieces of Bohemian crystal. A contraption called the Scintillator was mounted on a barge anchored in the Bay and generated steam and power using a locomotive. It had a bank of searchlights calculated to be the equivalent of 2,600,000,000 candles and projected beams of light creating a fantastic light display—like an early laser light show. There was a fish hatchery, halls devoted to the mechanical fangles of the day, a cigarette factory and a flour mill. Wow flour. More sensational was a Ford Model T factory where you could see cars being made and then drive one home. They delivered over 4,000.





day. The first fellow to drive a motor car 60 mph, Barney Oldfield, raced against Eddy Rickenbacker flying an aircraft. Eddy was soon to become an aviation hero in The First World War.

John Phillip Sousa supplied the oom-pa-pas and more highbrow music issued from the fair's own orchestra conducted by Camile Saint-Saëns. William Jennings Bryan mesmerized the crowd with his oratory. Buffalo Bill Cody, Diamond Jim Brady, Al Jolson, Helen Keller, Harry Houdini and Charlie Chaplin showed up. Secretary of the Navy Franklin Roosevelt walked briskly through the fair long before he was struck down by polio. The last pioneer mother of California, Patty Reed a survivor of the 1846 Donner Party, addressed the crowd holding the shreds of a doll she kept throughout her ordeal. Great artists of the day like Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran provided epic canvases. The first transcontinental telephone call was placed from the fair.



"Don't worry, I do this every day"

The buildings were as gigantic as the crowds. The Palace of Machinery was 1,000 feet long, 367 wide and 136 feet high and was the biggest wood and steel building yet constructed. The main theater on the grounds sat 3,500. The largest of several hotels had 1,100 rooms.

A committee of children beseeched the federal government to dispatch the Liberty Bell from Philadelphia. Yeah, that will happen. Tens of thousands signed a petition that was wound on a giant reel like a roll of film and the one ton roll was transported to Washington DC. Congress voted the kids down but President Wilson overrode them and the Bell trained west, as did so many important people of the



The most famous aviator of his day, Lincoln Beachey, wowed the crowds flying his flimsy aero-plane made out of spit and baling wire as they said in the parlance of the day. Lincoln flew an exotic array of aircraft including an early dirigible in 1910. I guess the spit failed to stick on the day he dropped his aircraft in the drink in front of over 100,000 spectators and died. The second most famous aviator shakily took his place.

On a single day attendance topped 350,000 which made it the largest gathering of people ever in the west and wasn't exceeded until the Rolling Stones Altamont concert in 1970 (I was there but trust me, if you missed it be glad you did).



The PPIE was truly an international fair with pavilions from around the world. There were hourly performances by dancers from Fiji, yodelers from Switzerland and uncomfortable looking Blackfoot Indians. The pavilions remind me of what ancient Rome crossed with Disneyland on steroids would look like. The grandeur was stunning and the mood was democratic and welcoming. There was an amusement park called The Zone with 900 attendants to keep things flowing and reparent lost children.

San Francisco emerged from a violent and at times lawless past but this was a chance for San Franciscans to shine. Crime was almost entirely absent at the Exposition. Anyone who could muster 50 cents was welcome. There were so many firsts and biggests it was hard to keep track. The world's largest typewriter, the largest horse statue, largest pair of concrete ostriches. At 60 feet the boots in Toyland Grown Up were the largest then (or ever) and there was a full sized reproduction of Yellowstone's Old Faithful Inn.

In the end 18 million visitors came and this when California only had about 3 million people. Of course many were repeats but it did attract folks from all over the world. Alas the fantasy city was all an illusion because it had been constructed of gypsum and hemp and it was always meant to be temporary. After 288 days the bulldozers and wrecking

balls moved in and demolished the magnificent structures. The Palace of Fine Arts was a stage set too and has been completely rebuilt, twice, of more permanent materials. Almost immediately America turned to war once again and (except for the Palace) much like Thebes (the original one *and* Demille's copy) the fair melted back

into sand dunes. Rain, gravity, time and the wrecking ball. The ultimate leveler of man's ambitions.



The Palace of Fine Arts today

Fishing



"Here's lookin at you kid."

One of the world's great fisheries was headquartered in San Francisco. Was. The sardine catches were so overwhelming that if you were fishing in water deeper than the line length attached to your net you could find your boat wrenched into the deeps when the fish dove for the bottom.

Sardines used to be a very big deal. Who doesn't like winding open a can of greasy little fish all lined up like... er sardines, with their beady little eyes looking up into yours (and being 80% bones and fins). Oh, and they go great with Saltines. The fact is no one eats

this dreck anymore unless you're a hobo or you're locked in a shipping container on the high seas or maybe if you're over 85. Cats, though, love sardines. Me, I'd rather eat the cat.

There have been more palatable fish than sardines caught along the coast. A hundred some years ago the big catch was salmon and it was canned from Alaska to Monterey then shipped all over the world. In those days canned fish was far more common than fresh fish and it was generally cheaper than the meat with feet. There was another fish being caught and canned but it sounded odious so few people ate it. This was horse mackerel.

In 1900 in one of the great marketing coups of all time someone had the idea that the name was the problem so the canners changed it to *tuna fish* and they added the slogan "guaranteed not to turn pink in the can." (Back then botulism from spoiled cans was a deadly scourge.) As a result of this brilliant marketing campaign, tuna kicked the salmon industry on its tail from which it has never recovered. So instead of wiping out the salmon we have been wiping out the tuna instead. But not to worry, we are eliminating the salmon too or have around San Francisco anyway. A few years back I bought a salmon fishing boat and about 6 minutes later they closed the season for 3 years. In 2012 the fish came back in pretty good numbers but then a long drought hit and the fish couldn't spawn. And still—it's suspiciously pink.

Wartime San Francisco

I well recall the day in 1969 when the letter showed up at my door telling me to "Come on down to Vietnam. Uncle Sam's in a hell of a jamb." Reading the letter (which I still have) brings back that moment with stunning clarity. I thought "War! What's it good for?" So many of us saw the world in terms of protest song lyrics. I knew 'the letter' was on its way so with the enthusiastic collaboration of an antiwar psychiatrist I pled insanity. The Draft Board laughed at me even if you *had* to be insane to go to Vietnam. Then I wrote the Draft Board telling them that my sister had joined the Air Force so wasn't one family member risking paper cuts in Virginia enough? But



“Now let’s see—who goes surfing for the summer and who goes face down in a rice paddy?”

number picking on TV. Can you imagine? There was a big plastic jar with some old fellow picking out balls and reading the numbers written on them. Couldn’t they at least have hired a leggy showgirl? It sure brought a whole new meaning to ‘your number is up.’ The Draft Board ended up taking the first 196 lucky contestants in 1970. My number was 96. “Hummm, maybe they will only kill half of me.”

I lived in Berkeley in a group house that ran on brown rice, drugs, sex and the occasional schoolbook. I took classes like 19th century Russian literature, Swedish and film production. I took time out from my intense studies and opened ‘the letter.’ It said in essence: ‘Y’all come down to the induction center in Oakland.’ I decided to ignore it. Ignore the draft-me part that is. I hardly ignored the war. I was part of the Antiwar Movement. Our aim was to stop the war, drive Nixon from office and end the requirement that undergrads had to take a foreign language to graduate. We would win on all counts. Over a million people died as well as a good many water buffalo and the Student Movement did really help end the war. The perpetrators were driven to their lairs in disgrace but to this day I can’t speak a lick of Swedish.

Amazingly, it was Ronald Reagan who brought the country together for the first time since Kennedy and this was only because it was a very lush era. Reagan took the credit for prosperity based on his trickle down theory. That’s where the rich let a little money spill over the rim of the golden cup so the masses could have a sip. “Gee thanks, mister.”

Well really what do I know about economics (he mused as he cruised slowly in his airship over California)?

San Francisco has always been ready for war. Well at least since 1794 when the Spanish built Castillo de San Joaquin an adobe fort at what is now the south tower of the Golden Gate Bridge.

After California became a state an aggressive program to remodel the outdated presidio began in 1854 with the construction of Fort Point (they must have gone home early after working for about 10 seconds to name this one). From the time of the war in

the U.S. of A. was running low on fodder so Congress instituted ‘the lottery.’ Now, unlike lottery tickets today that might make you a millionaire, the draft lottery was a medieval procedure used to load American youth into cannons and blast our shiny unblemished bodies over the rice paddies into the banana patch beyond—at the lucky lottery winners on the opposing side in the jungles of Southeast Asia.

The Draft Board broadcast this



The Baez sisters say yes!

1812 it was fashionable for forts to be built using stonewalls and brick cladding. The abandoned fort still stands under the deserted tollbooths and abandoned WW2 gun emplacements underneath the Golden Gate Bridge.

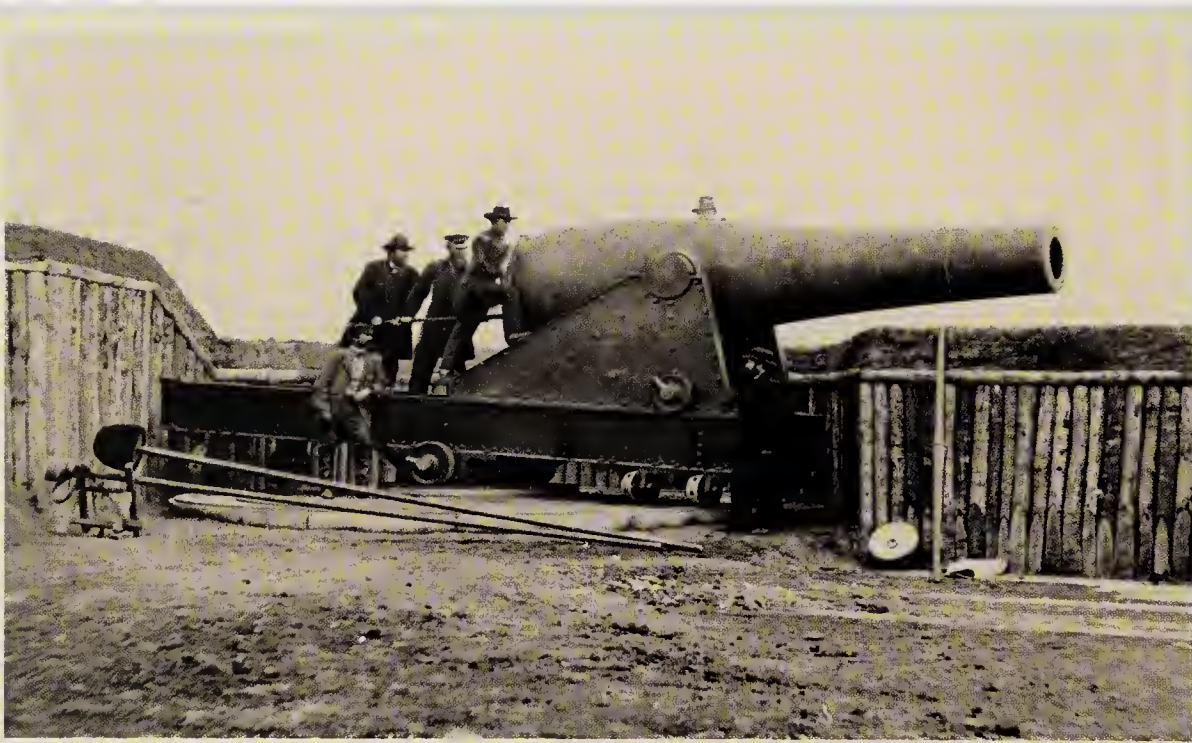
The Civil War And Beyond

25% of the folks in the West were Southern sympathizers during the Civil War but it seemed to the chief Confederate, Jefferson Davis, that invading California was a bit of stretch. Keep in mind that there was a shipping blockade around the southern ports and it would take 5 or 6 months to sail to San Francisco and to what end? No matter, Fort Point was well manned during the war. I imagine that it was far better service to count the cannon balls and go fishing every day than lie face up at Shiloh with a crow plucking your eyeballs out.

Alcatraz sits right inside the Golden Gate and in the 19th century all the way up to WW2 it was the cork in the bottle in terms of defending the Bay. Once cannons were able to fire beyond the limited range at Fort Point, artillery was installed on The Rock in great numbers. As the sabers were rattling between the Yankees and the Rebels, Union leaders in Washington decided that San Francisco had to be secured against a possible Confederate invasion. It seems a remote possibility now considering the nonexistence of a Confederate navy but it was taken quite seriously then. The first cannons were ineffective and had a propensity to split open when fully charged. This

had the deleterious effect of ruining the gun and blasting the heads off the gunners.

At the commencement of the War of Northern Aggression (as the Confederates called it) the island became home to the famous 'water bottle' or Rodman Gun. The 60,000 lb behemoths were raised and pivoted on an elaborate set of gears. They had a range of 3 miles. When it was determined that brick and stone palisades such as those located at Fort Point



The Rodman

and Alcatraz could be easily blown to bits so even though the new guns didn't split, a fusilladimus salvo from a warship would have a similar head decoupling result. A frantic remodel took place and massive earthworks were erected. This was completed at the end of the war when the non-threat was long gone.

At the conclusion of the Civil War there were 129 cannons on Alcatraz. It is doubtful if they would have had much effect on a determined invader.

Just because the Confederacy didn't have a navy didn't mean one couldn't be created. A group of enterprising Southern sympathizers calling themselves the Knights of the Golden Circle espied a small ship in the Bay, the Chapman, which they intended to seize under cover of darkness. The plan was to take a small arsenal out to sea where they would swing aboard a merchantman, with cutlass in hand no doubt, and make the crew walk the plank. Then install their trifling 5-pounder (that's the weight of the ball) and terrorize the coast. A gun that size is just big enough to rattle a dish but couldn't have sunk anything. By contrast the Rodham fired a ball weighing 500 lbs.

The conspirator's names seem comically absurd today. Asbury Hapending (one of the suckers from the Diamond Hoax), Humphrey Horsebox, Ridgely Greathouse and Alfred Rubbery. Much like Bertie Wooster in a P G Wodehouse novel they failed in their enterprise. It seems the skipper of their getaway boat had been paid part of his fee in advance, went on a bender, and shot his mouth off at the local saloons. The ringleaders were promptly rounded up with incriminating letters from Jefferson Davis in their possession and all the conspirators were sent to the Rock as its very first prisoners. They were sentenced to hang but Lincoln found them laughably hapless as terrorists so he pardoned them after the war.

The waters around the Rock were scheduled to be patrolled by a new sort of ship. An ironclad called the USS Comanche. This ship was built in the east, disassembled, and shipped round The Horn on the clipper, Aquila, arriving in 1863. This much anticipated gunship was still aboard when the Aquila sank. Those pesky Confederates were blamed but a withering ocean passage loosened the Aquila's planks to such an extent that it sunk at the dock. The ironclad on deck was raised, dried, oiled and reassembled but by this time the war had been over for 4 months. The Comanche is the only commissioned US Navy ship sunk before it went into service.

The Chapman Incident was one of several that took place in the west but in the end there were no shots fired in hostility during this war—with a single exception. In 1863 a ship was spotted from Alcatraz way out near the north side of the bay being towed by two large rowboats on a windless day. The custom was for a foreign ship entering the bay to come under the guns at Alcatraz and be boarded for inspection before being allowed to proceed to the dock. Because there was no wind the sentries could not read the flag of nationality so the defenders on Alcatraz fired a warning shot perilously close to the intruder's bow missing it by a few feet. The ship hove to and in short order answered with a 21 gun salute. This excessive counter punch was very like bringing a 3-tiered wedding cake to a kid's soccer game albeit one studded with blazing cannons.

At the time there was no love lost between the Union and the southern leaning British. If the ship had been hit it would have provoked an international incident of some proportion. But the ship would never have been hit by these expert marksmen, right? Well it seems that the shore batteries were rumored to be lousy shots before, during and after the war because they never got much practice. On one particular 4th of July it was decided to put this notion to rest and show the citizens some precision gunplay. When the big day arrived an estimated 50,000 spectators covered the hilltops and came out on the bay in small seacraft. A derelict ship was loaded with gunpowder and fireworks then anchored near the spot where the British incursion had occurred. After shooting over a hundred exploding shells the gunners were running low of ammunition and had yet to score a hit. It was decided to sneak a sailor aboard the target to light it on fire and shoot blanks at it until it exploded. No one was fooled but the crowd cheered mightily.

The party wasn't a complete bust as there had been libations of every sort laid in at the fort and during the siege some prisoners found the drinkables and the cliffs of Alcatraz were littered

with inebriated convicts. After the Civil War security on the island was pretty casual. The inmates were all military prisoners mostly serving short sentences for non serious infractions. Relations between the inmates and the soldiers were actually quite convivial. Some trustees served as man-nies for the guards' kids on the island and some prisoners had free reign during the workday. But others were treated a bit more firmly and were set to work the rock pile—literally making the big rocks somewhat smaller. These prisoners sported 6 foot chains attached to 24 lb balls. The ball was called 'the baby' and towing the baby around had a damping effect on the long swim to shore.

The Rock continued to attract military prisoners including the pacific Hopi Indians who had been sent for reeducation in 1895. The actual order stated: "They shall be confined at hard labor until they show evidence of a desire to cease interference with the plans of the government for the civilization and education



The menacing Hopis of Alcatraz

of its Indian wards." There was no earthly reason to drag them to the Rock and lock them up but Indians were relatively well treated and were herded around to local schools on the mainland to the delight of the school kids. The Hopis have the distinction of being the only Indian nation that were neither exterminated or forced to sign a peace treaty with the U.S. This makes sense because there really was no Hopi Nation. The Hopis were a geographic fiction defined by the Mexican government in the early 1800s. The term Hopi given them by the Mexicans means *peaceful people*. Each village was its own tiny nation and these few were deemed to pose a threat to the U.S. government from atop their isolated desert mesas. But hey, they might throw a rock at you.

Despite the rather cavalier nature of the prison with its short-termers and very little corporal punishment the army felt that its image wasn't being well served by this large, obvious prison what with its rumored dungeons and the fierce nickname—so the War Department and the Justice Department worked out a deal. This effort was led by none other then the bulldoginuous-faced founder of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover. Some in San Francisco were not happy to see this fortress be the very symbol of modern incarceration but J. Edgar couldn't have cared less about the local sentiment. J. Edgar wanted a supermax and J. Edgar got a supermax.

The incarcerated soldiers were sent to other briggs and the first hard-timers came on a cold day in August. Yes, it is generally cold in August in San Francisco. The 53 prisoners were delivered in 3 rail cars in cages that had been welded shut. Included was the most famous prisoner the island prison ever held, Al Capone. The cars were loaded on a barge at Tiburon and towed by a tugboat

to Alcatraz. The prisoners were chained arm and leg and slow-marched into their new home.

In 1911 the huge cell block, the one you can see today, was completed. It was the largest reinforced concrete in the world at the time. Another first for San Francisco. Yeah!

But as the infrastructure wore out and the expense of maintaining an island prison mounted, the penitentiary closed in 1963. Much as they had come, the remaining prisoners (now numbering 27) were marched in handcuffs to a waiting boat. The last one off was a bank robber named Frank Weatherman who summed it up best. "All of us are glad to get off. Alcatraz was no good for nobody."

Then the Rock went dark until 1969 when a group of Native Americans discovered a long ignored federal statute stipulating that if federal lands were left idle indigenous people could claim them and this is what they did. It began as a righteous fist being shaken in the face of The Man. I was at UC Berkeley at the time and took part in the flotilla ferrying food and supplies out during the 19 month occupation. You can still see the slogans painted on the walls declaring the place—*Indian Land*. The takeover lacked cohesive leadership and soon descended in anarchy and vandalism with several buildings being torched. Damn Indians have no respect for federal property.



"We are so outta here!"

The occupiers were finally escorted off with no resistance and Congress gave the keys to the California State Park Service. The idea was to open the prison for tours which the park folks thought would satisfy local curiosity and the public was expected to lose interest in a few months. Not hardly. Today this is one of the most visited sites in the world with over a million a year coming to sit in the cells pretending to be the Birdman of Alcatraz and other cute murderers.

Imagine for a minute if the Indians had held on to the island considering that a few years later all Indian lands were allowed to open casinos. The mind reels.

But WW2 was another matter. There

were really two World War Twos. The war in Europe had been going on for sometime but we thought that maybe things would be OK without our participation and the Americans stayed out of it. That is until German subs started sinking our ships. Did you know that bodies used to wash up on the Jersey Shore? It was bad. So we went with hammer and tongs after the savage Huns



and their less savage pals the Italians.

In the west we had other concerns. Most folks can't tell you why the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Here's the score. The Japanese were bent on expanding their empire from their small island to all over eastern Asia in the 1930s. They were following the same model we had used when we had liberated California from the Mexicans. Now the Japanese were tough hombres and they ran around northern China wearing out their welcome with a series of atrocities and dealing some serious pain. As they jabbed Indochina with sharpened chopsticks (and worse) we in the U.S. said *enough* and in July, 1940, Britain and the U.S. froze Japanese assets in their respective



Ready to give what-to to Tojo

countries. By then we had turned off 75% of Japanese trade and 90% of the oil. In November the U.S. demanded that the Japanese leave China and Indochina. On Nov 26th the Japanese set sail for Hawaii instead.

We knew a confrontation was on its way so we felt it would be expedient to drop into the Great American Gun Shop and pick up a few things for the protection of the Golden Gate. This included 110 artillery installations from 155mm mobile guns to the magnificent 16 inch stationary cannons. We had a second shopping cart filled with 128 mortars and to top it off we picked up a few hundred aquatic mines. We

brought in 6 companies of riflemen (these were the biggish rifles weighing over 100,000 pounds) which, with their support crew, totaled 45,000 men.

The Big Guns protecting the coast were so immense that they were test fired only once a year and believe me everyone knew about it. Unlike in the Civil War these 20th century artillerymen could confidently hit targets towed behind boats even if the sailors towing the targets were just a bit on edge. They could shoot projectiles so far that they disappeared out of sight beyond the Farallones, 25ish miles away. The way you checked your accuracy was to have a spotter watch for the splash through a telescope. The biggest projectiles weighed as much as a small car, 1,500 lbs. The charge was a separate section. These guns were the same bore as on the biggest battleships so it would have been a heck of a gunfight at the ol bridge if the Japanese charged the Gate.

By Dec 1st 1941 we announced that we were 100% ready for the possibility of a Japanese invasion. Why we had the Pacific Fleet unprotected at Pearl Harbor is for another book. On the weekend of Dec 6th we were planning massive war games in San Francisco to test out our new toys. War games consisted of a mock full alert with red and blue teams—one team would surge ashore in the dark and run into forts and gun emplacements smacking the opposing teams with bags of flour. No, really—bags of flour. Hilarity was to ensue, followed by beer and donuts.

But this plan was upset by the bombing of Pearl Harbor so we just repurposed the war games into a real war and took up battle stations. They did not pass out the beer and donuts that weekend.

As news reports filtered in on the first day, lights-out was ordered—the city was supposed to go dark so incoming bombers couldn't see the buildings. Any lights on the bridges was prohibited. Cars were banned near the beaches where all the guns were pointed at the enemy. Everyone more or less ignored the lights-out order and civilians by the thousands flocked to the beaches to

look for evidence of an invasion. Shops stayed open and a photo taken of the city lights that night from Twin Peaks showed that it was business as usual.

The generals in charge hit the roof and threatened the entire population with arrest so the next night the whole place was pretty well battened down. The streets were dark and the swords were drawn. The cannons were loaded and the crews stood at the ready. We had ringed the opening of the Gate with row after row of mines each packed with 800 pounds of TNT. These mines were strung out under water in a 7 knot current with a 600 volt electric cable to each one so they could be remotely deactivated. We had to be able to switch them off so we didn't sink our own ships. We had constructed a heavy wire net that shut off the entire Bay from the St. Francis Yacht Club to the Marin side near the North Tower of Golden Gate Bridge. The submarine net was opened for our ships with tug boats and cinched back up at night.

Vivid evidence of the war started coming in. On Dec 10th a Pan Am flying boat from Honolulu did a stop-and-go at Wake Island where it had been strafed with bullets but somehow limped home to Treasure Island.

On the 18th a sub attacked a tanker off Eureka. Then another ship was hit and sunk off Cape Mendocino. The Absaroka was torpedoed off Long Beach but as noted before — its load of lumber keeping it from sinking.

A Separate War

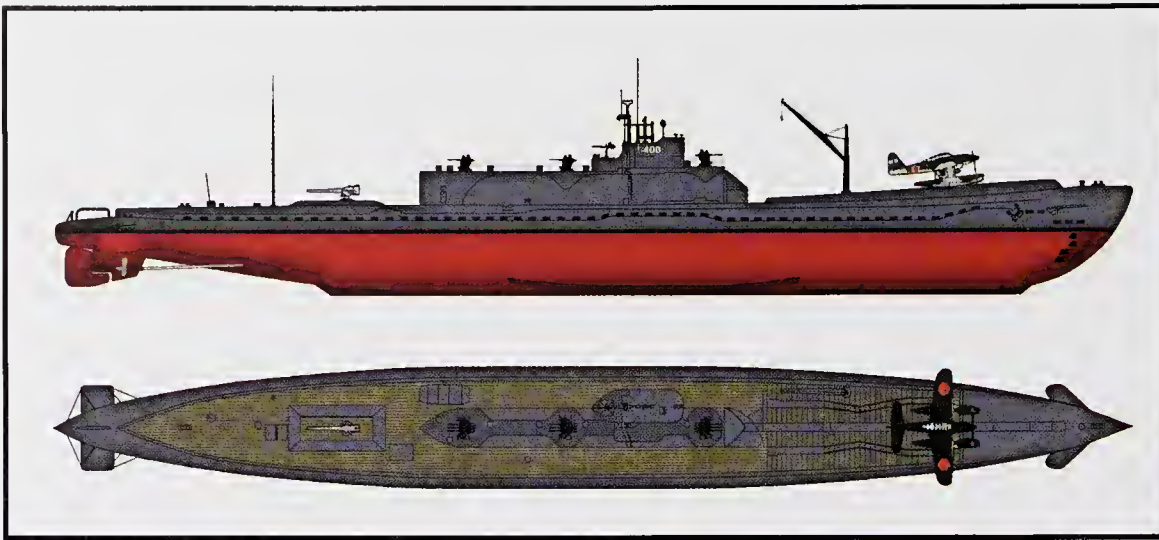
If you are less than say —45 you may not recall that for many years Southern California and Northern California were at war with each other. Many folks in LA felt San Franciscans viewed themselves as transcendently hip and way too cool for school. Yeah, that was true. Bayarians smugtenciously referred to *The City* even when visiting Rome as if there was only one *City* on earth. We saw folks in LA with their desperate clothes and tragic hairstyles as hopeless morons with turquoise-tinted poodles, tooling around in hot pink El Dorados, top down, even when it was 115 degrees outside. Until Hollywood had its big run-up, LA was actually the backwater and San Francisco was where all the action was. But once Tom Mix and that crowd rolled out the fame-train LA became the big dog. By 1920 LA was awash in new money oiled by, well, oil and peopled with ridiculously rich movie stars.

When the enormous star, Fatty Arbuckle, was found in a room with an inconveniently expired starlet at the St. Francis Hotel after a drunken binge in the 20s the SF Examiner lamented that the movie crowd was coming to San Francisco and trashing the joint in an article titled "Hollywood Must Stop Using San Francisco As 'A Garbage Can.'"

But then the war started to take off and San Francisco took back its mantle as the leading city on the Pacific Coast. Journalists called San Francisco The American Singapore because of the profusion of swabbies in their sailor duds pouring out of every gin-joint. The fleet was definitely in and by the late 30s it was a military town through and through. There were about 150 piers in 1941 and every one of them was on a war footing.

Passenger liners en route or making a retreat from Hawaii began showing up and had real trouble getting past the sub net at first.

There were seven 400 foot Japanese subs on the California coast in early December. They held in their bellies reconnaissance aircraft to be launched by catapult and could land on pontoons then be hoisted on board using a crane. These were essentially spotter planes (though they carried bombs) and were employed to evaluate the shore defenses. The Japanese had come to harass shipping which they did. There had been a scheme to bomb shore targets on Christmas Eve, but



instead they were all ordered to the Pacific Theater. They could never have done much physical damage because the strategy was to spread terror. This happened to a limited extent but the newspapers didn't talk it up so after a few weeks of very limited coastal action the

citizens along the coast calmed down. Of course at this time there was the suspicion of Japanese spies in our midst.

As noted before, the Internment was instituted very early in the war. 120,000 people from Japan or of Japanese ancestry were rounded up. The rumor mill, surrounded by grapevines, dusted with hearsay yielded elaborate fantasies that Japanese farmers had planted field crops in the shape of arrows pointing to defense plants and there were transmitters guiding an invasion hidden in the corncribs. Behind every inscrutable face lurked a Japanese spy.

This wasn't just a product of the war but had been going on for nearly a century in one form or another. In 1906 the San Francisco Board of Education ordered Japanese students out of the public schools and into special schools where they had previously banished the Chinese kids.

Xenophobic wartime paranoia wasn't limited to just the Japanese however. Anyone with an Italian last name was ordered off the waterfront in San Francisco. Since this meant nearly every fisherman, it shut down the fishing fleet for the year it was in effect. About 1,600 Italian Americans were arrested, 250 Italian citizens were interned in military camps for up to two years, another 250 were excluded, that is, ordered to move out of designated military zones, and 600,000 were forced to submit to curfews and other restrictions on their freedom. Italian language schools were closed and Italian American organizations, such as social clubs, were harassed. Rosina Trovato, classified as an enemy alien, was one of those evacuees who could not believe what was happening to her. Sadly, she received her notice to evacuate on the very day that she learned that her son had gone down with the USS Arizona in Pearl Harbor.

Other Americans were also targeted by the internment. 11,000 people of German heritage were imprisoned, along with some Jewish refugees. The Jewish refugees who were imprisoned came from Germany. The U.S. government didn't have the time or inclination to differentiate between ethnic Jews and German nationals.

It is easy to look back and see this as a broad overreaction but looking back and second guessing ourselves we all should have bought Apple stock at \$22.



Not exactly headed for summer camp

There were other reactions to the war that caused inconvenience. Veronica Lake had made it big in Hollywood with her lusty looks which included her peek-a-boo hair style. She was often seen in her films swiping her hair back only to have it immediately fall back over one eye. The War Department asked her to knock it off and there is a funny bit of film you can find online showing women making bombers and tanks constantly fussing with their peek-a-boos. This (coupled with the occasional head of hair being jerked free of a machinists head by a spinning lathe) convinced Veronica to have her hair mowed down to a patriotic bob.

As we geared up for war, San Francisco became a major ship-building center. Over a 1,000 ships were constructed on the bay during the war. Sausalito was one gigantic shipyard and there were several others. The first Liberty Ship was delivered in 244 days. By 1943 it took 50 days. One was built in a record 8 days. At the conclusion of WW2 we had a great many ships left over but these couldn't be burned. Several dozen have rotted at anchor on the Sacramento River years.



Veronica with a terrified panther



Maybe Ecuador will take em

blearily through the checkpoint without rendering the password. The sentry yelled, "Halt or I'll shoot" but the sergeant kept on going. The sentry shot him. Or rather shot through the trunk of his car permanently disfiguring the Plymouth's radio as the bullet lodged between the two warriors. Suddenly they remembered the password well enough.

Finally after all this war effort a shot was fired by a soldier at another soldier in a war in San Francisco. First there was a war with Mexico, followed by the Civil War, World War 1 and then WW2 but no one was actually shot at on land. The incident took place on the Golden Gate Bridge. It seems a certain Sargent Murray and another soldier were returning from a drunken party in Sausalito and they failed to heed the sentry in the fog or maybe the fog in their heads. In any case Murray drove

Other San Francisco Milestones

On Feb. 16th, 1910 San Francisco detective Tim Riordan arrested Jolly Trixie, aka Miss Kitty Plunkett, for allegedly violating the Penal Code. She was accused of being deformed and exhibiting her deformity for money in a Fillmore Street theater where all 600 lbs of her were on display. Two physicians testified that she was perfectly symmetrical and the charges were dropped.

The very next day there was an elephant stampede not far from where Trixie had been picked up and try as I may I can find no actual connection between the two events. It seems that 3 elephants came to town as part of a vaudeville act and were on parade in the streets before that evening's show when a loud noise sent them into a frenzy. The pack of pachyderms panicked, went rogue, and charging down Taylor Street, crashed through the windows of a butcher shop barging over the counters and driving the traumatized shopkeepers into the basement. Out on the streets once more the red hot renegades coiled their trunks around the bars of a cable car full of people on Powell Street and rocked it back and forth until they managed to capsize the conveyance. Then they gleefully rampaged through a winery on Chestnut knocking barrels all about and vacuuming up the spilled wine. This calmed them down some but still it put everyone in mind of Hannibal's march with the elephants over the Alps into Rome.



Carol and her moneymakers

Wranglers eventually lassoed the miscreants and led them to the theater where they sobered up and trod the boards as scheduled.

It's hard to top an authentic elephant stampede but an event one night in North Beach came close.

The first topless bar in modern times in San Francisco was Carol Doda's infamous Condor Club at Broadway and Columbus. Carol was one of the first to undergo what was then referred to as 'mammary enhancement.' Mammary—a word salaciously outré today.

So Carol strapped on a terrific pair of 44s and she was open for business. The club featured a white piano which had a serious hydraulic lift system to elevate it over the strippers. One night the bouncer Jimmy Ferrozio was, ahhh, having congress, in congress, mating with...how do I say it?...having good old fashioned bouncer-stripper sex with one Theresa Hill when he kicked the lift handle during their congressional session. Busy legislating, they failed to realize that they were on a stairway to heaven or at least Jimmy was. The couple was found by the janitor in the morning with Jimmy expired but Theresa still kicking, futilely, at the handle.

Realizing that San Francisco was fraught with unpredictable perils we turned our great sky yacht around and sailed back out the Golden Gate for points north.

DRAKES BAY

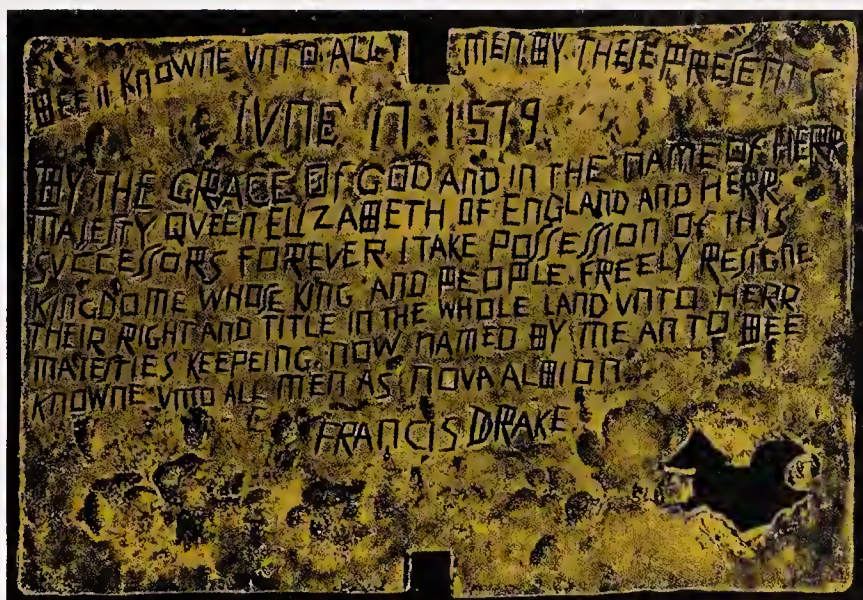
In 1579 Sir Francis Drake was circumnavigating the globe for Good Queen Bess when he discovered that the hull of his ship, the Golden Hinde, had become so encrusted with sea life that their speed dropped from exceeding slow to oh-my-god-this-tub-is-sooo-sloooow. The common practice was to careen the ship by entering a protected bay and winch the vessel up onto the beach at high tide so the barnacles could be pried loose and the seams caulked. Drakes Bay is the place

where legend has it that this transpired and the little bay was either named for him or it was just a huge coincidence that he ended up in a bay of the same name.

According to a journal kept by the ship's chaplain, Francis Fletcher, "The company fell with a convenient and fit harbor" for refitting in June 1579. While in the harbor Drake entertained hordes of amazed locals, and with great ceremony claimed California on behalf of Queen Elizabeth the First. Drake named the place New Albion or The New White Place after the cliffs of Dover on the English coast of which he was reminded. He instructed that a brass plaque to be made and installed on a wooden post.

From Frances Fletcher: "a pounded plate of brasse" as "a monument of our being there" that claimed "her majesties, and successors right and title to that kingdome." The journal also recounts that the plate included the date of the landing, Drake's name, and Queen Elizabeth's portrait on a sixpence coin affixed to a hole in the plate. This plaque is one of the great artifacts from the Age of Exploration.

To the immeasurable joy of Dr. Herbert Bolton of UC Berkeley the plaque finally turned up after being lost for centuries. Dr. Bolton had been looking for this treasure for 30 years and was jubilant when it was unearthed and conveyed to him in 1937. The plaque came to him because he was the go-to guy for all things Drake in California history and it was natural and perhaps



destined that he would end up with it. He toured with the plaque in a specially equipped 'history truck' and with tremendous pomp he finally had it installed in the Bancroft Library at Berkeley.

The fact is, he was not only destined to have the plaque—it was planned that he have it. It seems some characters from the E. Clampus Vitas society had forged the forged plaque. The ECVs or simply the Clampers are a fraternal organization dating back to the Gold Rush days in the Sierras. Many miners objected to the stuffy seriousness of the Masons and Oddfellows so they formed the E. Clampus Vitas society. The name is Latin gibberish and the organization is as good as the name. They are still around and their prime directive over the years has been to install bronze roadside markers around the state commemorating real but trivial events like a spitting contest or a barn collapse.

Dr. Bolton was a familiar sight on the beach at Drakes Bay where he hoped to unearth the plaque one day. And he might have done so if someone else hadn't found it first. A facsimile of the plaque was made, aged with acid and planted in the sand in front of the professor who was combing the beach with some students in his charge. But Dr. Bolton didn't see it and somehow the spurious plate wandered away on its own much as the authentic one had.

6 years after the fake plaque went missing it was found in the tidal mudflats near San Quentin Prison 25 miles east of Drakes Bay. Now well seasoned it looked real enough and it made its way in short order to Dr. Bolton. This discovery was the crowning achievement of a brilliant career.

Now the Clampers were and are a jolly bunch and not at all mean spirited so they were vexed that the trick had so perfectly backfired. They had actually written on the back of the plaque ECV

in invisible ink and had planned to have it found in the morning immediately after its installation and at a celebration dinner that night the hoax would be reveled. But with the intervening years and the professor making it a cause celeb the joke got loose and took up a life all its own.

The Clampers tried various avenues to unravel the monkey-shine without ruining the good doctor of whom they had grown quite fond. One Clamper printed a booklet titled *Ye Preposterous Booke of Brasse* that cautioned that the plate should be studied closely because it might be a fake. The professor ignored all the warnings. In fact the hoax was not revealed until 1971 when x-ray spectrography reveled the brass of to be of contemporary vintage. And the wording on the plaque was so unlike 16th century English that it would have been hard to swallow by anyone except those



“yee-ha!”

who wanted, beyond all good sense, for it to be the very one Drake nailed to the post. Dr. Bolton went to his grave before the hoax was exposed—still a hero. I hope I’m that lucky.

The plaque is still on display at the library but with an updated description. The Clampers continue to install plaques.

Drake rehabilitated his ship and sailed into history as the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe but other explorers who arrived on this shore were not as fortunate.

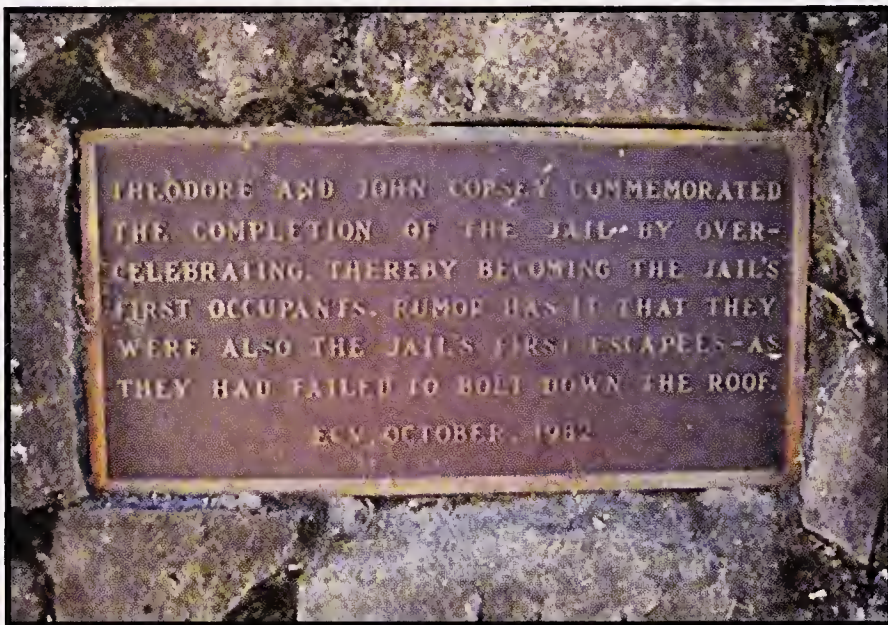
First the back story. In 1565 Phillip II of Spain claimed the Philippine Islands (hence the name) to take advantage of the profitable trade with China and the Spice Islands. The

Spanish galleons that sailed between Manila and Acapulco carried incredibly valuable cargoes making this insane trip profitable if they made it back, of course. The ships were built on the beach in Mexico, or later the Philippines, and made the year long loop from the home port to the opposite side of the Pacific and back.

In the 20 years since they commenced this trade route no ships dared approach the lee shore of California to resupply. This seems curious to us today but a lee shore and a galleon do not mix. If the prevailing winds are blowing from the sea onto the land as they nearly always are on the California coast it can be very difficult to get near enough to the shore to launch small boats. If you sailed into San Francisco Bay or Monterey you could wait for a good wind and tide but these places had not yet been discovered.

After leaving Manila the ships had first to negotiate the reefs, shoals, and islands of the Philippine archipelago. This was the most perilous leg of the voyage. They sailed as high as northern Japan where they would catch the westerly winds taking them to North America. Spain maintained this transpacific commercial route for 250 years until 1815 and it was one of the longest and arduous ever navigated.

After several months the sailors finally saw that the coast was near as they encountered seals, shorebirds, bobbing kelp, and driftwood. Longitude, the east-west position, was impossible to accurately calculate until precise clocks were invented especially after so long at sea. The coast-



al fog and occasional glimpses of real estate caused them to turn the galleons south at these first indications of land. They had good reason to fear the coast because it is all rocks and smashing waves coupled with a pesky onshore wind. By now with food and water running out the crews would begin dying of disease, scurvy, or exposure. Scurvy was a major killer in those days. Lack of vitamin C found in fresh fruit and veg causes your teeth to drop out and your skin to slide off. Long-healed bone breaks would come unknit and your viscera turned to jelly. If only they had known that feasting on the briny salad flourishing on their hulls would have prevented this sailors-woe they would have taken more delight in their junket.

In 1595 Sebastian Cermeño captain of the San Augustin left Manila in July and first sighted land around today's Oregon coast in early November. He had been charged with finding what was up with the shoreline and reconnoiter for a place to resupply. Sebastian sailed down the coast without any luck until he rounded a point of land and anchored in a large tranquil bay. The next day when most of the crew was ashore heavy rollers caused the ship to drag anchor and it was soon beaten to Pick-up Sticks on the beach. The Indians milling about were delighted by the mysterious object that came crashing ashore with its magical bounty spilling forth from the hold.

Several of the crew drowned but 70 men found themselves shipwrecked on the sand. Still business was business so Sebastian claimed the land for Spain and named it the Bay of San Francisco, a name later applied to the larger bay to the south. He told the savages, in Spanish no doubt, that taxes were to be paid and they would have to stop having sex in the open, no more dancing and to cease running around naked. All the gunpowder and most of the swords had been lost so the savages just laughed and kept on dancing. A few years earlier the Indians had been made subjects of the English Crown so they didn't mind it so much as their new status came with some fantastic brass buttons, iron nails and bits of Ming china—material which they greatly treasured.

Sebastian salvaged a small launch from the wreckage of the galleon and, using the now abundant planks littering the beach, raised the gunwales to accommodate 42 of his men. The crew members set sail on the 2,000 mile journey to Acapulco trading shards of china and tatters of fabric for food from the locals as they picked their way along the shore. Trash from the world beyond was like moon rocks to these folks.

The first stop was the Farallon Islands, about 25 miles southwest of Pt. Reyes. This course took them far enough out to sea that they missed discovering the entrance to San Francisco Bay. Continuing south, Sebastian mapped Monterey Bay and San Diego before finally arriving at his home port in Mexico.

The rest of the crew said they had had enough sailing plus the boat would have been dangerously overloaded so they generously offered to go by land



and said, 'no you take the boat we'll snag an Uber.' Actually they walked. Amazingly everybody got back safely even if the hikers were pretty tuckered out and promptly imprisoned for mutiny.

The failure of this enterprise caused Spain to steer clear of the coast—a fact that allowed the locals to keep running around in the buff for another couple of centuries. The ship's loss also led to a policy of land oriented rather than sea borne exploration and as a result, the San Francisco Bay would not be discovered by the Spanish until Portola showed up in 1769.

The San Augustin wasn't the only ship wrecked on this treacherous shore. There are at least 72 other marine disasters in Northern California recorded during the period 1840 to 1940 alone, resulting in at least 30 wrecks in Drakes Bay or on the Point Reyes Headlands. I have rounded Point Reyes many a time in seacraft worthy and less so. It isn't the Straights of Magellan exactly but the swells rolling down from Alaska become pinched as they crowd around the point and bunch up with the ferocity of a skinny dog on a ham bone.

TOMALES BAY

One of my favorite things to do is cruise by car, boat, chopper or dirigible to this amazing slice of geotechnic wonderland. It's cold and foggy a lot of the time but when the sun is out and you find a small waveless cove all to yourself you can dig your feet into the sand and while the clock away as you wait for the tide to come return and refloat the boat that you inattentively grounded in the shallows.

Once I was on the bay with my 3 sons in a Hobie Cat which we (er...I) managed to turn upside down near the mouth of the bay. It was so shallow that the mast got stuck in the mud and the kids were swimming around lightly hemorrhaging and complaining like kids do when they're gently sliced and bobbing about in 62 degree water. Somehow we were able to right the boat,

pack up and go to the movies. My oldest son, Dylan, had been singularly unhappy when he found himself bleeding in the water ("Hey, kid it's just a scratch, deep, deepish, yes, but just a scratch... kid?...kid?"). It seems he had been reading about



the great white shark ‘encounters’ (I love that; it means: *chomp!*) that happen with greater frequency at the mouth of Tomales Bay than nearly anywhere else on earth. It is one reason why almost no one ever swims there.

We all know that you are more likely to die choking on a chicken bone at dinner than eaten by a shark but these odds change if you find yourself bleeding where the sharks are having dinner themselves.

Tomales Bay is one of those places where it’s quite countrified though agriculture itself has nearly died out. In the 19th century there were great many more farms, cows and fishermen. Initially the goods went by ship and later by rail to San Francisco. The rail line ran to Sausalito where the produce, dairy and chickens were ferried to San Francisco.

The Pierce Ranch is now an open-air museum where the Pierce family used to make butter which was then dispatched cityward. You can visit the farm with its one room schoolhouse where the offspring were sent from farms all round the bay. In the 1980s I attended a party at Heart’s Desire Beach and met a local waterman well into his 80s. He recalled a time around the turn of the century when he sailed a small wooden skiff the two miles across the bay with his sister when he was 8 and she was 6. They did this by themselves and the crossing was not the most dangerous part of the journey. He told me that they would land the boat and struggle to get it above the high tide line and then hike up the hill to a fenced pasture. If they cut across the pasture they could shave a considerable distance off the trip. But first they had to spot the bull named Moses who ruled this particular pasture. If they judged him to be too close they might be trampled when he charged. I asked him how often the bull charged and he said, “Moses always charged.”

I asked him if he wasn’t worried they’d be killed and he said, “Sure, but it saved a real long hike. Once we had to drop our schoolbooks and Mo just tore them all up.” Kids *were* tougher back then.

There is a cartoony cliché about bulls charging and it’s no myth. When my kids were little there was a bull that arrived as a calf at our next door neighbor’s. He was bottle raised (the bull, I don’t know about the neighbor) and as tame as a dog. Dilemma was a Brahma bull and he would come over nearly everyday to drink out of our pool. One game the kids played with him was to hold his tail and Dilemma would tow them along on a skateboard. One day the bull decided he was a man and stomped his handler a bit flatter than was convenient. Oh yeah, bulls really *are* dangerous.



Tyler messes with the bull

FORT ROSS

The Russians sailed down from Sitka and established a fort about a hundred miles north of San Francisco in 1811. They called it Fort Rus (Ross) which means *Russian* because unlike the Spanish they weren't all get-to-heaveny by naming every bump in the geography for some saint. Their approach was so very unlike that of the Spanish. The Russians weren't there to save souls or to make a place for feckless lads unfit for grander posts. The Russians had a very different



outlook than the Spanish who busily broke the Indians like so many twigs for the fire.

The Russian's couldn't have cared less about saving the Indians' souls or their own for that matter. They were hard drinking, trail-hardened frontiersmen and were only interested in harvesting the furs of the seals and otters that the sea offered up. Furs meant big money. The seal pelts were valuable but nothing compared to the otter. 200 years ago the value of otter fur, ounce for ounce, approached that of gold.

In a few years Fort Ross became the most important community north of Monterey easily leaving Yerba Buena in its shadow. It was there that the first wooden building in California was erected and it still stands though most of the fort is a replica. It was at Fort Ross that the Russians introduced the first window glass and they brought the first metal stoves too. These things might sound inconsequential today but this was high tech stuff then.

Today Ft. Ross is a state park and has been repopulated with cannons of the era. Every fort needs artillery so they hauled the original ones from St. Petersburg to Kamchatka, sailed them along the Aleutian coast, finally installing them on the parapets of the fort—a trip of about 12,000 miles. They also freighted black powder and cannon balls. The guns were entirely useless as there were no armies to repel, the Indians would never stand still to be holed by a round and the non existent enemy warships would at no time come under the guns. Facts like these have never stopped the military mind from being prepared. But what do I know? I'm just a civilian.

Although the head office for Russian North America was in Sitka, Alaska, Ft. Ross was the easternmost expression of the Russian empire which stretched tenuously all the way back to St. Petersburg. It might have been a slender thread but unlike the inmates in the far reaches of the Spanish boondocks who were left pretty much to their own devices, the top brass in St. Petersburg directed every detail of the enterprise and jerked their charge's chain with regularity. This was made doubly difficult because a message took a year to send and a year to hear back. I can see some poor schlub running to the mailbox just as the ship was pulling away. черт! черт! черт!

In 1840, the otters were so depleted that maintaining Fort Ross was not worth the expense so the Russians pulled up stakes and left. As previously noted they sold the cannons, window glass, kitchen and farming equipment to John Sutter and took a promissory note for payment. How they imagined they could collect I don't know but the idea of hauling the cannon balls all the way back to Russia must have made them wince.

MENDOCINO

This is a quaint village by the sea, popular with German tourists (where isn't it popular with German tourists?) and for the fact that there is a staggering amount of marijuana grown in the hills and dales. In fact much of northern California is devoted to this enterprise and a good deal of the rest of the state is as well. The dollar value of marijuana overwhelms all other crops in this crop-infested state. In summer the plants are conspicuous from 500 feet but one does not tend to hover over a farm for long. But come on, surely they aren't armed with RPGs are they?... are they?

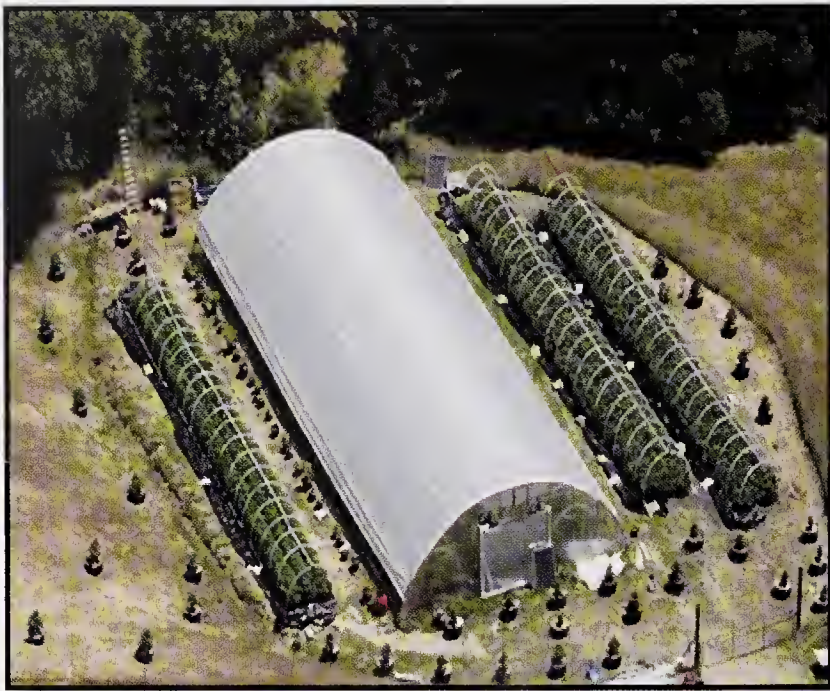


At this writing the state is in flux over the impending legalization

from the quasi-legal situation today. With 'medical marijuana' we have one more example of how we establish laws and practices and then let the citizens step over the line. This leeway, this slop in the gears, is most interesting and is practiced by all societies to greater and lesser degrees.

In ancient Byzantium, the Eastern Roman Empire's corporate headquarters in Constantinople, it was the practice to proscribe very precisely what everyone was permitted to do through a vast body of legislation. They had a great many bureaucrats administering the tax and price structure and every commodity—pots, boards, sacks of grain and cloth had to be prepared in a specific standard manner and precisely priced by government edict. And this back in 200 AD. This standardization was helpful for commerce but certainly strangled creativity. In this society a person was considered to be a fleshy component in the machinery of civilization and the individual was just an interchangeable part.

In more self entitled societies today the individual is elevated and people are given more leeway even to the point of allowing for a good deal of technical violation of established law. We need look no further than the highways where speed limit signs have turned into suggestions or the nationwide practice of employing undocumented labor. Most people will happily take tax deductions that would not pass careful scrutiny and everyone in the world jaywalks, right (actu-



ally they don't jaywalk in Japan)?

The whole unseemly world of medical marijuana is yet another manifestation of this. Once we acknowledge the few who are using marijuana as medicine we are left with everyone else who is winking at the law and tepidly pretending to be sick with doctors pretending to medicate and people chuckling at the insolvency of the laws. I'm not interested in discussing the merits or drawbacks of actual consumption—I'm simply pointing out that it is inelegant to dance about in such a dishonorable fashion. Marijuana cultivation is one of the biggest industries in the nation and is at once legal, quasi-legal, or illegal

depending on where you live. In 2013 in New York City there were 28,000 arrests for possessing marijuana and in San Francisco people smoke weed on the streets. It's true these laws are changing but that doesn't do anything for the millions left with criminal records.

Let's step back for an even broader look. In America today one of our biggest domestic problems is the fact that the average person is being waged war on by certain business interests. We Americans used to consider ourselves plain talkers who were prone to truth telling. But we are now in an era where there is a lot of us-against-them. Labyrinthine contracts from phone companies, mortgages bundled with felonious misrepresentations engineered to deceive, airline fares designed to obfuscate, doctors incentivized to treat—not prevent, and a legal system that has turned incarceration into a for-profit business. We have processed food manufacturers geared to make money at the expense of our health, extremist hysteria-mongers promoting lies as truth and petrochemical profiteers using the skies as a sewer. And there's the NSA. Then we have all-American corporations deciding to pack up the corporate potted plants in the lobby and up-stakes for Luxembourg or Ireland so their shareholders can avoid U.S. taxes. When did we start to see legal as being the same as ethical? To this we add our wink-wink at laws and we have a formula for a society that lacks self respect and integrity.

This is the state of things today but in the past it was much worse. Before food, drug and water regulation, labor laws and other protections—it was no picnic. But it's today where we live and today where we have to try to sort out all this unprincipled sleight of hand.

Keeping marijuana illegal makes the criminals happy and the police and prison guards busy. Legalizing marijuana will definitely result in more people lying around chugging bigger Big Gulps and scarfing BBQed bacon flavored Pringles in a daze—performing with less efficiency in their jobs and lives resulting in more general dumbness. The older generation of lawgivers are soon going to their reward (some sooner because of smoking cigarettes and drinking liquor) and the new blood will legalize marijuana.

So what's my solution? I don't have one. I could open the windows of the Eureka, lean out and scream, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore!" But that's not going to do any good at this altitude so I'll just sit back in my comfy chair and eat a tasty egg sandwich as I gaze out the window at the marijuana ranchos below.

FORT BRAGG

Now we are flying over trees, trees and yet more trees and beaches and more beaches. Ft. Bragg is a typical northern California town and it is pretty easy to find local cheese, wine and abalone. The abalone are not commercially taken so you will have to dive for them yourself and, sorry, no air tanks, free diving only. A half dozen or so die each year in search of this mollusk. Most are middle-aged men out of their depth because holding your breath in the cold, murky and churning sea is hard on the body.

The waters below our airship team with sea life and the kelp sways back and forth in its endless tarantella of wave and tide. As we sail along we see the glisten of Glass Beach in the sunlight.

For generations the townsfolk dumped their refuse on this picturesque beach below the cliff at the edge of town. They would light trash fires to the delight of young boys who combed through this dump looking for treasure. Much to the chagrin of these lads the practice came to a halt in the 1960s and all the biggish stuff was then cleaned up and tossed into someone else's back yard. The glass remained however and remains to this day. Sea-worn now, the beach is a glittering affair and is one of the highlights when visiting this town.

Actually unless you want to dive for giant snails in 53 degree water Glass Beach is the only highlight.



THE LOST COAST

The Lost Coast is so called because it is the only sizable piece of California to have lost population since its high in the 1930s. When farming in the region died during the Great Depression the towns withered like a cheerleader's smile on hot Texas asphalt. The rugged coast prevented a coastal highway and the communities on the Lost Coast region such as Petrolia, Shelter Cove and Whitehorn remain isolated from the rest of California. Petrolia was the site of the first oil well in California—yeah!—but the oil and the enthusiasm to develop the region soon petered out. These towns are accessed by tedious loopy roads and most of the residents are no doubt in federal witness protection or wish they were.

The zone from San Francisco to Oregon is so sparsely populated that the entire coast is just one congressional district. Or so I thought when I heard 2nd District Representative Jared Huffman on The Colbert Report. Jared said that his district encompasses the coast from the Golden Gate Bridge to the Oregon border and it had the tallest and the oldest trees in the world. This was his opening statement during the interview. The fact is Marin County is not in the 2nd and trees 4 times older are found in the White Mountains east of the Sierras. Colbert called him on it but the congressman seemed undeterred by actual facts. It seems curious Jared would be so ill informed



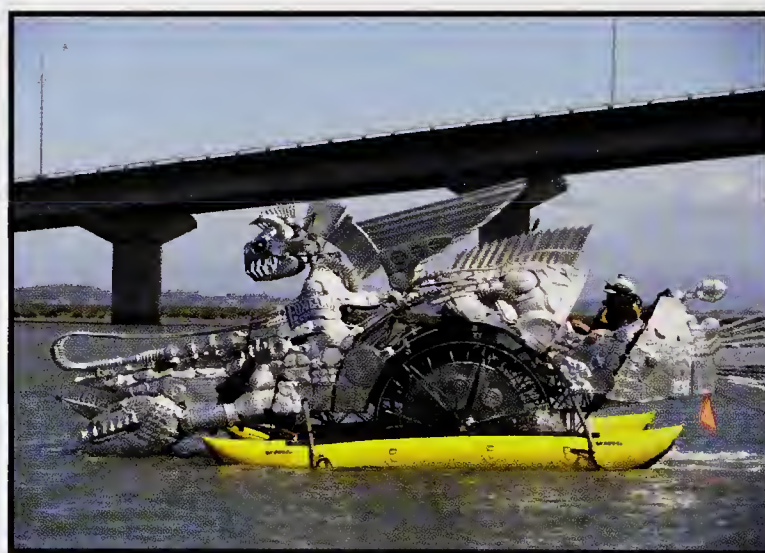
about the flora and geography of his district. Maybe he's good at volleyball.

There are lots of trees though, if not the oldest ones. Below it goes trees/beach/trees/beach. The towns beneath us simply disappeared altogether for a while and then we encountered the village of Ferndale. Coming upon Ferndale is like stumbling onto a movie set. This entirely unlikely place is a perfectly preserved Victorian town built largely in the 1880s in what was then, and now, the edge of nowhere. At first pass it is hard to imagine a way for them to

have made a living but it seems that it was once a major dairy region and there are still quite a few cows in residence. Long before the popularity of aerosol cheese-like food-parody, dairy played a much bigger part in the diet of Americans. Butter and cheese were more practical to ship than vegetables and fruit and Ferndale became a place where San Francisco got much its dairy. The 3 day voyage by sea, cool and damp, made this commerce possible. As a result fortunes were amassed and grand mansions were erected these became known as Butterfat Palaces.

Ferndale is also the finish line for the Kinetic Vehicle Race which is a 3 day, 42 mile bicyclish race over land, sand, mud and water. These off-beat vehicles predate the wild ones at Burning Man by decades (the race started in 1969). The craft vary from the size of bathtubs to an articulated fish at nearly a hundred feet.

Called the 'Triathlon of the Art World' these mobile sculptures are lyrical works of art. Many are animated with eyes that roll and mouths that breath fire. Builders spend years perfecting their conveyances and like any ecosystems the race cars mutate and morph at the whim of the creators.



CRESCENT CITY

The other end of the race is north in Crescent City. Crescent City is actually a big town with faint echoes of a better time years ago when lumber and fishing were major industries. The Crescentians generally mention the fact that at the kickoff to WW2 (December 19th 1941) a

ship was trying to sink off the coast after being holed by a Japanese torpedo. The crew abandoned the sinking oil tanker for the lifeboats and were just a little chagrined when the ship arrived on the beach more or less intact just after they did. The bow is on display in the middle of town.

If you've never heard of this attack it's because it was the custom at the time to suppress war news that might lower morale and then after the war it was old news. Newspapers had a tacit agreement that they wouldn't print certain news like Franklin Roosevelt having a girlfriend, or being in a wheelchair or the fact that in 1945 an American B25 bomber crashed right into the Empire State Building. "Waaaaaht?" you say.

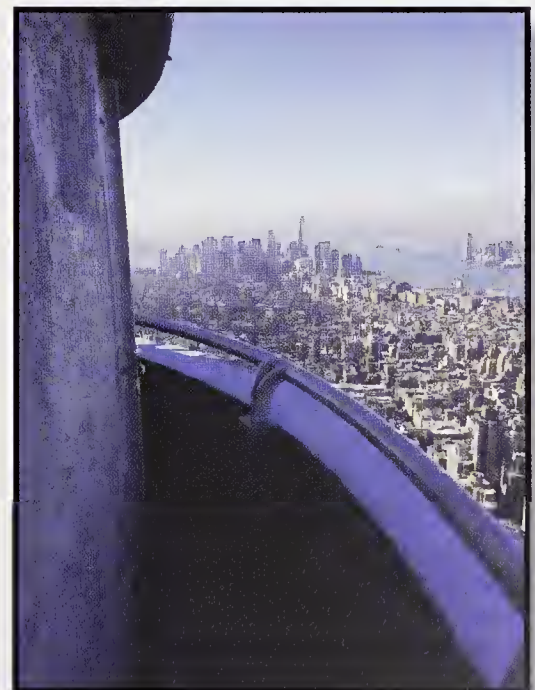


An airplane was lost in the fog and hit the 79th floor on a Saturday morning. 14 people were killed. One of the plane's engines traveled all the way through the building, out the other side and sailed for a block before crashing through the roof of a penthouse incinerating the joint.

One of the elevator operators, Betty Lou Oliver, was badly burned so they hustled her into an elevator by herself and hit 'G.' The rescuers stayed behind to help others. The cables turned out to have been compromised by the impact and immediately snapped, the safety gear failed and Betty Lou plunged downward, the car picking up speed as it wizzed past each floor. Betty Lou floated, weightless, in the car for a few seconds not looking forward to her appointment in the basement. But as she approached the bottom a strange thing happened. The elevator car started to slow down as the cables piled up underneath it creating a shock absorbing spring effect which broke her fall as well as her back, neck

and pelvis. On arrival—the doors burst open and Betty Lou was found tangled in a confusion of cables and chunks of the car with burns, fractures and a record for surviving the longest free fall in an elevator. She lived another 54 years. Most folks have never heard about this incident because even if the news wasn't exactly suppressed it was certainly downplayed.

Many people have heard, though, that airships, in fact the biggest dirigibles in the 1930s, were scheduled to tether to the Empire State Building's mast. The passengers would disembark using some sort of chute to the 103rd floor with their steamer trunks and then they'd be in New York City in two days instead of the 10 it would take in an ocean liner. This was a great idea even if it wasn't true. I was on the 103 floor in 2014. (I happen to be acquainted with the man who's grandfather built the building so we got to go to this normally off limits area). The 103rd





has a 25 foot in diameter walkway accessed by a ladder, through an equipment room just under the spire. The walkway is about 30 inches wide and the rail is just over waist high. There is no way to get from the gondola of a 800 foot airship swinging in the wind. It makes a memorable story though.

The real story is a little murkier. Then as now a decorative or radio mast isn't counted as part of the structure's height but a mooring mast would be. So add a 200 foot mast to a 1,200 foot building and it becomes amazingly taller. No one really admitted to this in the 30s but the Empire State Building is officially 1,454 feet tall. And the mast makes a handy place for King What's-His-Name to grab hold of.

How does a long winded story about a building in New York make it into a book about the California coast? Hummm, good question. It's just that I'm a big fan of the building. If you have never been there or think that going there is sort of corny, consider that the Empire State Building typifies much of what is great about America. Of course it was the tallest but it was also the

largest building in the world until the Pentagon was built. Visitors to the lobbies positively jump for joy at the grand sweeps of Art Deco polished stone and metal detailing that still looks brand new. And here's an amazing fact. It was built in 13 1/2 months! I've see bathroom remodels that take that long. This building is one of the city's, the country's and the world's great examples of art, craft and society.

The topography of the ocean floor in front of Crescent City provides the town with ideal tidal wave amplification conditions. There have been 4 major tidal waves and many smaller ones. In 1964 the Anchorage earthquake delivered shock waves that caused the sea to surge across the community with a 20 foot high wall of seawater removing the buildings and depositing fish, fishing boats and fishermen in their place.

Crescent City is the sort of town that kids long to leave and nearly all of them do. We left as soon as we got there.



EUREKA

The name of our ship and this city expresses the optimistic boosterism so very American and specifically Californian. Like other places in California, there was a rush to riches in Eureka but their rush wasn't for things in the earth so much as standing above it. At one point this seaport was

*Eureka has a picturesque waterfront popular with billionaires & movie stars.
Larry Ellison has 25 homes there proving that very few read these captions.*

the world's largest exporter of wood. The timber barons erected resplendent Victorian mansions of staggering size and meticulous detail.

Curiously Eureka is also home to a remarkable number of outsized things. One corner sports a gigantic fly, another a 6 foot clam. In one neighborhood you will find a huge tooth in front of a house and there is at least one boot as tall as a lumberjack. It must be the proximity to the Trees of Mystery to the east in Klamath that makes folks want to *think big*.

The 46 foot tall Paul Bunyon is sensational but the trees aren't particularly mysterious. The owners thinking that a sign saying **Giant Trees** wasn't a seductive enough draw tacked on the word *Mystery*. I think they should have said 'Big-time sexy tree show' but they aren't my trees.



A popular pastime in big tree country used to be to cut a hole in a redwood tree and charge people to drive through it. This was prior to more alluring forms of entertainment like television and paragliding. You can still drive through car-sized holes in ancient redwoods. One famous one was the Wawona Tree in Yosemite but tunneled trees have a tendency to fall over as has

the Wawona. But there are still 3 drive thru trees upright...for now.

Lumbering today is a shadow of a previous age. In the late 1800s there were 76 lumber loading points in Northern California. Most



Wawona



Renamed after the fall to: Fallen Tunnel Tree

were steep piers precariously sliding logs on cables to bobbing ships. People were ferried on and off the freighters in buckets (picturesquely called 'lard buckets') which were winched up and down over the crashing surf. I'll stick with the Zeppelin.

It almost came to pass that Northern California's tree entertainment industry didn't make it into modern times because nearly all the big trees have been cut down. In this age of transparen-



cy where every dog has a web page a truly secretive group is called the Tree Seekers. This is not their official name. That's a secret. The membership is also not disclosed but I am assured they exist. Their goal is to visit the tallest trees in the world. Why so secret? Well at least one person hates either the big trees or the folks who love them.

One reason for this is Julia Butterfly Hill's 738 day tree sit in a 180 foot tall coastal redwood. Julia and her friends decided the way to keep this and other trees from being cut down was to occupy them and so she ascended December 10, 1997. A great many comments were made for and against this action. Initially I didn't pay much

attention but as time went by and I looked at the issue I learned that 95% of the old growth redwoods have been cut down and a good number of those in a most shocking manner. Many of the trees were so gigantic that when they hit the deck they would shatter into billions of chopsticks, useless even for firewood. One contemporary account says that about half of the biggest trees ended up being ruined in this fashion.

It was the efforts of Save The Redwoods League, Sempervirens, The Coastal Commission, The Feds and people like Julia B who have helped preserve the few that are left. If the lumber interests had not been reined in, every single one of the old growth redwoods in California would have been chopped down so a handful of already wealthy men could make some more money. Initially the lumbermen clear-cut entire regions. Later, when people started to complain, they left a hundred foot buffer along the highways to silence those pesky tree-grumblers who didn't appreciate that these trees were someone's private property.



The saddest group of kids I ever did see on an ol stump

Lumbering in the 19th century was foot for foot about the same size as it is today but was a much more significant percentage of the economy. We are number one in wood. Who is number two? Stop guessing. It's India. India? Yes, followed by China. Ethiopia at 8? Wild.

Soon after the 1849 Gold Rush the north coast economy was called King Timber and Eureka was its apex. Up north in the Colombia Gorge in Washington they decided to end run Eureka and assembled ship-sized rafts of timber and towed these to sawmills in San Diego.

The giant trees were cut down to build the countless saloons and bordellos in San Francisco and because that city ignited with stunning regularity there was a smoking demand for boards. Many of the Victorian mansions the lumber barons built in Eureka still exist. The Carson House is the consummate example of this style. Next to Hearst Castle it's the best place imaginable to strut around in your velvet smoking jacket, chomping on a Havana and contemplating your mastery of all things great—puff and small—puff. Today the town's principle industry seems to be the countless tattoo parlors catering to the scholars at Humboldt State.



I can see this in Malibu

of a vast lumber mill. The Cookhouse is open to the public today and is highly regarded by the locals. It's not the Cliff House maybe, but you go with what you got, yes?

Eureka is not far from the seat of the State of Jefferson movement. In 1803, Thomas Jefferson envisioned the establishment of an independent nation in the western portion of North America which he dubbed the 'Republic of the Pacific' which would be a country of like minded people such as the Canadians. Jefferson's original scheme has since been embraced by a number of different factions with generally similar aims—some serious and some less so.

On November 27, 1941, a group of young men gained national media attention when, brandishing hunting rifles for dramatic effect, they stopped traffic on Route 99 south of Yreka and handed out copies of a Proclamation of Independence, stating

Flying along the coast and seeing how much of the forest is now being protected is terrifically heartening. Until the last hundred years or so natural beauty was more abundant and was taken for granted. Back then this commodity had little social value. We now see it differently. One of the strengths of America is our freedom to gripe about ourselves and by so doing have kept a few selfish folks from Beijinging the bejesus out of the place.

On the beach in front of Eureka we flew over the Samoa Cookhouse which used to be a lumberman's mess hall and it's still in the middle



The Cookhouse

that the State of Jefferson was in “patriotic rebellion against the States of California and Oregon” and would continue to “secede every Thursday until further notice.”

Scores of individuals and businesses centered around the Oregon California border flew the double-cross flag of Jefferson showing their contempt for the political process. Their motto was “Politicians and diapers need to be changed often for the same reason.” This rebellion collapsed when WW2 started a few days later.

In recent times The State of Jefferson movement morphed into the Cascadian Independence Project. This is a toothless piece of political theater composed of part unemployed logger, part libertarian anarchist and a few environmentalists. The Cascadians spend a lot of time talking about freedom and somewhat less time promoting cooperation.



Northern California is also the place where the highest concentration of ‘vengeance balloons’ was recorded. From late 1944 until early 1945, the Japanese launched over 9,300 firebomb balloons, of which 300 were found or observed in the U.S. They were launched from Japan and drifted across the Pacific in the jet stream in just 3 days. The balloons had sophisticated hydrogen gas controls for lift and descent and incendiary bombs programmed to plummet into the landscape after a certain period of time. The envelopes were made of mulberry paper, called washi, and assembled in large public halls by hungry Japanese children many of whom subsisted on the rice paste used to laminate the layers.

The plan was for the balloons to plunge into the forests igniting fires in the dry tinder thereby panicking the citizens. The rigs proved difficult to program with some drifted all the way to Kansas (‘Dorothy, is that you?’) and as far south as the relatively fireproof Mexico.

By early 1945 Americans were becoming aware that something strange was going on. Balloons had been sighted and explosions heard from California to Alaska. A P-38 fighter plane shot down a balloon near Santa Rosa, another was seen over Santa Monica and bits of washi were found in the streets of Los Angeles.

The only casualties from the balloons happened just over the border from California in Oregon in May of 1945. A woman and her 5 children found a downed balloon in the forest and as they approached it exploded. They were all killed as the father looked on from the car he was unpacking. These were the only deaths due to enemy action in the continental U.S. in WW2.

As we sailed ever northward toward the border between California and Oregon, about 350 miles from San Francisco, the cities ebbed into towns, which became villages and finally dwindled to a trickle of weed bedeviled doublewide trailers mishmashed beside the highway.

The Great State of California doesn’t conclude with any sort of grand finale. It just winds down like a tired old clock. There is a piteous sign declaring the last few miles to be the ‘lily bulb capital of the world’ and the roadside is dotted with ‘last chance liquor stores’ before you get to



the more laid back Oregon (but unaccountably with tighter liquor laws). There are a couple of chainsaw repair shops and a blister of tattoo parlors. The only businesses that are thriving are the Indian Casinos, peddling their swindles to simpletons, which spring up as one goes further north. A mile or so from the border with Oregon we spotted the Ship Ashore Gift Shop. This is a 120 foot steamer that was somehow kedged a few hundred yards from it's briny home to serve out it's sentence as a tourist emporium. When I was there it featured Nazi memorabilia, Beanie Baby dioramas, Halloween

pirate costumes and a very loud dime-operated musical donkey with a red hat, a broken leg and a frown. Tragically this museum, though still there, has been abandoned due to a lawsuit filed by a lawyer protesting the lack of handicap accessibility (hey, the wheelchair inclined need Nazi stuff too!)—a calamity to the local economy. Just one more shipwreck along the coast.



Jedediah Smith

The Americans were certainly aware of The West since Louis and Clark came overland in the early 19th century. In 1826 Jedediah Smith and his crew of mountain men were the next white men to cross from east to west through the Mojave Desert. In 1827 he came over again—this time through the Sierras and in 1828 Jedediah and his party made it to today's Northern California border with Oregon.

Note: It's a sign of the times now that it's a bit prickly to mention the term *white man* and the achievements of one. Terms are ever evolving. Some eschew the term Indian as being the inaccurate application of faulty geographic knowledge but the term Native American is layered with complication as well. Amerigo Vespucci was an Italian mapmaker whose name more or less accidentally became affixed to the New World is not much of an improvement.

Anyway, Jedediah, a paleface, came to the Pacific Coast at today's Oregon California border looking for the Buenaventura River. This was a mythical waterway imaginarily flowing from the Salt Lake to the Pacific. He hallucinated he could use the river to ferry fur from the Rockies to the Pacific. It's hard to imagine today the tremendous value of these pelts. It wasn't primarily so they could be worn as coats although they were. The best pelts were shaved off the hide and made into felt hats. This involved floating the fur on vats of mercury and patting them into a uniform thickness before being pressed. Fussing about in vat of toxic mercury resulted in the rumor that hatters went mad. This is one rumor that is true.

Generally mountain men were a tough irreverent lot. Jedediah though, was a religious man who didn't smoke, consort with the local women and he tea totaled. A real stick-in-the-mud.

Too bad ol' Jed didn't have a handy Zeppelin to sail over the hard parts of his wanderings.

The California/Oregon border

The actual border is a deserted and uneventful stretch of beach. The boundary is a straight line more or less following the Smith River. I guess it doesn't matter if the river's mouth lines up with the state line as the river is a puny thing named for a nearly forgotten guy.

The place is a placid contrast to the fierce boundary with Mexico 840 miles behind us. This somnolent stretch of sand is a sedative after the historical bounty of the south. It looks much as it did when Smith showed up on the heels of the Spanish, English, French, Portuguese, English, Russians, Japanese and the Ice Age wanderers from Asia.

We disembarked from our magical ship and, walking along the deserted beach, realized that after 13,000 years of coastal habitation this beach is unchanged. The cold sea licked away at the seashore as it has done for millions of years. As we rambled along I glanced down and saw my footprints being swept away with the swoosh of a wave. And our trip was done.



How this book came about

This voyage itself is an amalgamation of several aircraft trips smushed into one. Primarily we were in the largest airship flying at the time, the 246 foot - $\frac{3}{4}$ inch Eureka. Also figuring in the story was the Tommy Hilfiger's Lightship blimp and some of the territory was covered in a 1946 Grumman Mallard, an amphibious airplane; also a Huey helicopter, a smaller Bell helicopter and a motorized hang glider (or maybe I dreamed that deathtrap). For narrative purposes these aircraft were merged into the Eureka. I can say that every inch of the coast was inspected over the course of several years.

The—we, I refer to are various friends and family members, primarily my 3 sons Dylan, Tyler and Rowan as well as my wife Margaret.

In 1999 I decided it would be grand to travel the length of California from the border with Mexico to the Smith River and tell the story of the coastline. I could have gone by car but I'd seen nearly every scrap of coast that way. I could have flown in a small plane but one misses a lot. There are helicopters but they are noisy and unoriginal.

So really, the only aircraft left was an airship. I had seen Tommy Hilfiger's blimp at Moffett Field in Mt. View from the highway and discovered that at 216 feet it was the biggest blimp in the world. So naturally I would have that blimp. This blimp travels with a crew of 22 and comes with a portable mooring mast truck and a huge mobile helium supply. In other words, perfect.

I reached out to the Hilfiger folks and explained that I wanted to borrow their blimp for a trip along the coast. I would write a book about the journey and a TV crew would film the story. I told them I was confident that the TV show would get national exposure and the whole affair would be just great for all of us—and I suggested that they pay for the trip. Now I come from a family of card sharks and hustlers and I gave it a pretty hard sell. Amazingly, they thought that it was a grand idea and they agreed that they would try to work it out.

Then I nailed down the TV production company and was wrapping up the details when Tommy's people called me and said, "We have bad news. We have to get rid of the blimp."

"What?! When?" I asked.

"Thursday," they said.

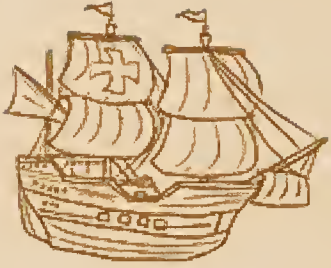
"Agggghhhahag!!!" Well hells bells, I thought—but then I realized that the ship didn't die. It just had a new owner. I phoned the new owner and caught him on a golf course in Florida. We agreed to meet up. His company was Colleges.com and he said was going to use the blimp to make his website famous by cruising around and giving blimp rides to students who got good grades. (Ya, that sounds like a moneymaker). I agreed to provide much needed ballyhoo with my plan and he looked at me with a puzzled expression and asked what *his* motivation was to have me use the ship.

"Why indeed? Isn't this all about publicity?" I asked.

"Aw, I dunno, I just want to give kids rides and sell them used textbooks," he said. So he repainted my blimp and sailed away into the dotcom crash that took place around Tuesday of the following week.

So I shelved the idea until one bright sunny day when the Eureka sailed over my path and looking up I vowed she would be mine. And so she was.







California Here I Come

When the wintry winds starts blowing
And the snow is starting in the fall
Then my eyes went westward knowing
That's the place that I love best of all
California I've been blue
Since I've been away from you
I can't wait 'till I get blowing
Even now I'm starting in a call

California, Here I Come
Right back where I started from
where bowers of flowers
bloom in the spring
each morning at dawning
birdies sing at everything
a sun kissed miss said, "Don't be late!"
that's why I can hardly wait
open up that Golden Gate
California, Here I Come

California, Here I Come (yeaaaaaah!)
Right back where I started from
where bowers of flowers
bloom in the spring
each morning at dawning
birdies sing at everything
a sun kissed miss said, "Don't be late!"
that's why I can hardly wait (come on!)
open up (open up! open up!) that Golden Gate
California, Here I Come

Al Jolson 1921
The California state song